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## A spontaneous liberality

By Noël Annan

L. P. WILKINSON:

A Century of King's 1873-1972

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Kingsmen of a Century 1873-1972

394pp. £10.50

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Cambridge: King's College.

"I warrant you imagine", wrote Thomas Gray, just three weeks a freshman, to his friend Horace Walpole, "that people in one College know the Customs of others; but you mistake, they are quite little Societies by themselves... What passes for Wit in one would not be understood if it were carried to another, thus the Men of Peterhouse, Pembroke and Clare-Hall of course must be Tories; those of Trinity Rakes; of King's Scholars, of Sidney Wigs, of St John's Worthies men and so on..." Freshmen are apt to make such confident judgments upon arrival. But some may feel - *mutatis of course mutandis* - that the future poet had a good nose for Cambridge gossip.

There are two indisputable facts about King's College, Cambridge. It is exceptionally beautiful and it has always been odd. King Henry VI, its founder, inspired by William of Wykeham, intended his scholars at Eton all to go on to King's, so that the College became almost the exclusive preserve of Etonians as its sister at Oxford, New College, was for Wykehamists. It is not quite true that for over four centuries none but Etonians entered the College; after the Reformation until the end of the eighteenth century a few Fellow Commoners from other schools were admitted. But stricter notions prevailed in the nineteenth century and it was not until 1855 that the reformers were able to get to work. They could not begin earlier because wicked Provost Thackeray exercised his right to refuse to allow any business of which he disapproved to be brought before the Governing Body; and as no business which contained a scintilla of change saw the light of day the reformers could only twitter disapproval.

Even after Thackeray died it took time to throw open the College to those from other schools. The new Provost and the reformers moved at once and were commended by the Royal Commissioner in 1860 for their "spontaneous liberality". But it took eleven years for the Fellows to be released from their onths and to get the new Statutes; and eight years later an eccentric non-resident Fellow appealed to the Bishop of Lincoln as Visitor, who without taking legal advice gave a ruling which upset the College's plans to create scholarships for non-Etonians. It was not until 1873 that the first non-Etonian scholar was admitted, a Rugeian who was to become the father of Rupert Brooke. L. P. Wilkinson chooses this date to start his two volumes and he ends ninety-nine years later, when the first women were admitted as undergraduates.

Since 1882 (the date of the next Royal Commission) most colleges have published an annual report, and very boring most of them are. The annual report of King's College, however, is enlivened - if that is the word - by its obtuseness. In 1929 J. T. Sheppard became Vice-Provost and began to expand what had been the bare bones of men's careers into full-scale obituaries. This labour of love is today in Mr Wilkinson's hands and the tradition has ennobled him to write a short history of the way the College grew to its present size from a handful of bachelor resident Etonian Fellows and thirty-four students, and also to give an account of its ethos, which has changed over the years yet preserved its curious individuality.

In the second volume, Mr Wilkinson presents in detail the lives of many of the men who passed through the College, grouping them according to the calling in which they made their mark later in life. If you regard Oxford colleges as self-regarding, self-satisfied, socially divisive élites, irrelevant to the nation's future, these volumes are not for you. But if you want to know something about an idiosyncratic academic society, which irritates other colleges in Cambridge but is admired by individuals in them and which may tell us a little about our culture by its fancies, its follies, its ideals and deliberate unwelcome -

by its very failure to produce in the past hundred years a succession of statesmen - you will enjoy a study which is neither idolatrous nor apologetic. College histories too often smother the reader with *pictas*. Mr Wilkinson is too distinguished a scholar of Horace to ignore that virtue, but he lightens it with that other Horatian virtue of *humilitas*. There is no hint of malice but his account, amused and amusing, does not lack edge.

In colleges at the ancient universities where decisions are taken by votes there will always be groupings or even parties, usually vague but occasionally virulent. C. P. Snow's well-known novel *The Masters* reflected accurately the divisions which existed in Christ's before and after the war. (Five years after it was published, in an election to the Bursarship of the College, the present Master, Jack Plumh, was defeated by one vote after much clandestine intrigue with all the bitterness of personal feeling portrayed by Snow.) This would never have happened in King's. To take up a predetermined political position there would have been thought to indicate an immature mind. Impossible to predict the votes on any issue: good reasons - well, at any rate, reasons - could always sway votes. Very few Fellows thought that because a particular Fellow had spoken in favour of a motion that in itself was sufficient cause to vote against it; and indeed there was a tradition of tolerance among them and much genuine affection.

Nevertheless, parties were bound to form at a moment of tension; and in late Victorian days they can be said to have resembled two cricket teams, the Gentlemen and Players - those to whom the Eton connection was paramount and those who wanted to broaden the College's horizons. The "Best Set" in King's, the Etonians, led by A. C. Benson and Arthur Tilley, they decided who from other schools might be admitted to it and were well-dressed, *comme il faut*, cultivated, Christian gentlemen. The Players, like Wedd, E. M. Forster's mentor, Robert Ross was an undergraduate, he took his lead from them and in his first year published in the *Granta*

an unflattering account of the College which deplored the Etonian ascendancy and advocated that Oscar Browning should be made Vice-Provost - a proposal palpably inspired by O.B. himself. The Tutor of the College, Tilley, suggested to some of the Best Set dining with him that they should throw Ross into the fountain. This they did, and in those days they were doing nothing peculiar. What was peculiar was the reaction in King's. The sense of outrage at this lack of tolerance was such that Tilley was compelled by the College Council to make a public apology at Hall dinner; and he later had to resign his tutorship.

The Players too were captivated by Etonians. Bradshaw, the descendant of the seaside who presided at the trial of Charles I, was the epitome of the tolerant, hospitable scholar. He and Oscar Browning were the great encouragers of shy, mistrusting freshmen from minor schools and the allies of the Sellywags as they called themselves. Yet, here again, the party was not ideological. Bradshaw lived by the spirit but he was the friend of Karl Pearson who, as an undergraduate, had compelled the College to abolish a freshmen's exam in Divinity. O.B. kept a crucifix on his door to "frighten the agnostics"; but when an undergraduate presented a petition in Hall dinner to the High Table "in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord", the sweating silence was broken by O.B. "Would you mind passing the potatoes?" In 1889 Provost Austen Leigh made a speech deploring the existence of any Best Set and M. R. James set out as Dean to abolish the division. The Eton era finally came to an end when Provost Durnford died, in 1926, the last of the old order who became a Fellow, returned to Eton as a master and then came back to King's, in his case as Provost, which he celebrated by appointing his nephew as Domus Bursar, a post for which the nephew lacked some essential abilities.

Long before Durnford's death, however, these parties began to dissolve. The ideals of the grammar-school boys and those hardy middle-class specimens who had no love for their own public school began to permeate some of the Eton college; even more significant, the num-

ber of Etonians who were appointed to staff Fellowships began to decline. The easy, self-satisfied Gentlemen were faintly hostile to intellectual adventure. "We don't want James", Wedd was heard to murmur when the succession for the Provostship was being discussed. "We don't want James. James doesn't care for the intellect." James's reputation as one of the leading world authorities on medieval manuscripts might have been thought sufficient to dispose of this criticism. But it was true. James did not care for intellectual speculation or for the self-conscious pursuit of truth or for generous ideas. He liked gossip and literary allusions, and years later, when Provost of Eton, he expressed his alarm that King's might elect Keynes as Provost; and for good reason.

For the most notable defection from the ranks of the gentlemanly was Keynes himself. It was Keynes who, as a young Fellow before the First World War, was brutal enough to challenge Grant, the Etonian Bursar, with devastating analyses of the Bursar's financial policy, and he carried with him another Etonian Fellow, the future cryptographer, Dilwyn Knox, and a group of younger men who styled themselves the Young Turks and included good scholars such as Adcock and Charles Webster. The new party was again a two-party alignment, but the parties stood for principles which had little to do with the old battles at the turn of the century. These had been concerned with religious observance and gentlemanly behaviour. The new division was less social than moral.

The two new parties could be described as the Green Ties and the Black Ties. The Green Ties stood for the virtues of intellectual adventure, gaiety, pleasure, vitality. They stood for sexual disreputability. They descended from both Oscar Browning and Lowes Dickinson and their leaders were Sheppard and Keynes. The Black Ties were respectable, *bien-pensant* and the guardians of orthodox scholarship. Their leader was the economic historian "Honourable John" Clapham, and the staid, more conventional Fellows followed him, as did the older scientists. The height of their intellectual ideal was ability in solid research,

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Indian of his day after Gandhi and Tagore.

Then there is the nest of cryptographers in Room 40 in the Admiralty during the First World War and at Bletchley during the Second (Mr. Wilkins himself among them). Dr. Wyn Knox, Adcock and Frank Birch served in both places, but the greatest genius was Alan Turing, who made the cardinal discovery which solved the riddle of the Enigma machine. He was later to commit suicide rather than face charges in court of homosexual misconduct—possibly a sobering thought for those who declare how disgraceful it was for any homosexual to have been employed in intelligence work. Mr. Wilkins's second volume may not quite have the isosyncratic penchant for anecdote which made Monty James's *Elon and King* such agreeable reading; but it illuminates some remarkable characters who would confirm foreigners in the view that Englishmen remain eccentric and independent.

"Now, do tell me," John Betjeman asked long ago in Hall on a visit, "which is the *dullest* college in Cambridge?" That great lover of the obscure and lowly, of the person who is both too in at ease and disdainful to be on the make, and too humble to excite the interest of biographers or the world, would miss in these pages what is perhaps the most touching feature of the obituaries in the *King's Annual Report*—the record of those who are not much known outside their own circle yet nevertheless emerge as full of individuality and even hilarity. It is not that they do not appear in the text, because many whom the world considers dim are acclaimed in the minute territory in which, like a bird in the dawn chorus, they trill out the message that is their own. Such a man was the masterly conveyance and tax expert, Arthur Cole, who while in New York to give evidence on the Astor settlements was to be seen, a small and oddly dressed gentleman, with tie passed through a ring, seated on a public bench near Battery Point listening to his daughter read aloud Mrs Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*; he meanwhile doing embroidery. Inevitably, Mr. Wilkins has too little space often to draw more than the edge of the curtain aside. But when he does, the revelation makes one wish that he would now bring out a (fairly) uninhibited volume of reminiscence. Or that a social historian would consult the records and obituaries from which this tale has been spun.

If he were to do so he would come up against some paradoxes. The century Mr. Wilkins is studying witnessed the decline in the importance of the colleges in Cambridge. During the nineteenth century not only the University but Britain owed an incalculable debt both to Trinity, the greatest of all colleges, and to St John's, for setting new standards of scholarship through their annual elections of Fellows; and in particular for developing an incomparable tradition of mathematical and scientific research. It was Trinity's example which the King's reformers kept before their eyes, and these three colleges did much to popularize the new triumphs in natural, mechanical and "moral" sciences, economics and history. Even more important, by creating a teaching staff they eventually pushed into the wings the older generation of coaches who trained the wranglers and senior classics as if they were athletes. Before 1914, in a very real sense, the colleges were the University.

But in the 1920s the last of the Royal Commissions recognized that the college laboratories disappeared. Scientific research had to be organized by the University; and at Cambridge, unlike Oxford, it was recognized that not merely professors, but the lecturers and demonstrators should be appointed by the University and not by the colleges. Colleges could back their fancy and pick young Fellows, but these had no guarantee of being employed by the University. The Act of 1923 compelled colleges to make their tutorial accounts self-balancing, which meant that even the richest colleges could not appoint a limitless number of dons to their teaching staff, whose emoluments in respect of their office had to be paid from fees. Once the

University began to be funded from the University Grants Committee, the colleges became an adjunct. They provided residence for the students and bachelor Fellows and, until long after the Second World War, the rooms for those in the humanities in which to teach and research—until eventually the University built departments for most of the arts faculties. Colleges continued to be founded and some would argue that they were social necessities. Or were they social conveniences?

Yet the Oxford and Cambridge colleges exercised in the first half of the century a profound effect upon British higher education and still more upon the sixth forms. Mr. Wilkins's story begins with the reformers at King's trying to create scholarships for non-Etonians. They continued to pursue this policy even when the agricultural depression of the 1870s impoverished the colleges and they imposed upon themselves a degree of self-sacrifice which no don would endure today. In 1877 every Fellow was paid £280 a year. By 1895 that figure had fallen to £80. Yet the Fellows of King's never abated the amount which they had decreed for creating open scholarships and exhibitions. At that time, too, vast sums were spent on new buildings, in order that the number of undergraduate places could be doubled. If King's was to be spoken of in the same breath as Trinity these scholarships and exhibitions were all-important: the Victorian reformers saw them as the key to meritocracy.



But the Oxford and Cambridge scholarships were far more influential than the reformers ever dreamed. They transformed the pattern of national secondary education. If anyone asks why it is that children specialize at such an early age at one school or why they begin to choose even as early as fourteen to follow the humanities and drop mathematics and science (or vice versa), why the level of attainment in those specialist subjects at eighteen is so high that they are able to obtain a first degree after only three years; and why so many arts graduates are innumerate, the answer is simple. The Oxford and Cambridge scholarships were the blue ribbon of sixth-form education. Intended though they were to help the poor boy come to the university, the public schools no less than the grammar schools used the scholarship syllabuses in mathematics, classics, natural sciences, history and modern languages as the goal for those who were to read for honours. The entry qualifications, Responses or the Previous, were set deliberately low so that the pass men would not be excluded; and exemption from them could be gained by obtaining five credits in the School Certificate, an examination which could be taken by an intelligent fifteen-year-old or by the brilliant at fourteen. What after taking this exam was a boy to do? King's for long held an entrance exam which demanded a higher standard than was demanded for matriculation; but after the Second World War the scholarship examinations were used more and more as the main way of obtaining a place at a

college. They set the curriculum for the sixth form.

Of course, there were grammar schools which never expected to send a boy or girl to Oxford. Of course, the civic universities set their own certificate examinations though they were influenced by the Oxford and Cambridge boards. Of course, the Oxbridge colleges insisted in their scholarship syllabuses that history specialists, say, should show proficiency in Latin and modern languages; and an English essay was demanded. But everyone knew that the prizes went to those who showed outstanding merit in the specialism of their choice. Everyone also knew that the academic prestige of a school depended on how many medals it won each year at Oxford and Cambridge. I know I'd sooner win two School-house matches running than get the Balliol scholarship any day," said old Brooke at the School-house supper; but the headmaster's son, Matthew, as a Rugby schoolboy was sent up to compete at Oxford and got it. Eighty years later the young Cyril Connolly wooed the Brackenbury at Balliol and was told that the world was at his feet. But one suggested reform after another went down into the dust and sixty years later still yet another proposal, N and F examinations—designed to remedy the early specialization which the scholarship exams imposed—was rejected. The Advanced Level Certificate, which adopted the principles but not the liberality of the college scholarship examinations, was one again confirmed as the straight and narrow way, despite the existence of the Baccalaureat, Abitur, Matura or College Board.

The scholarship examinations which in the first half of the century had done so much to raise standards in the secondary schools, now affected only a fraction of those who entered a university, but the pattern which they set was imposed upon England and Wales through A Levels. Secondary education had got caught in a vice. There were too many with vested interests to welcome a change. The Government had an interest in keeping the time in which university first degrees could be taken to three years: equally the medical and legal professions did not want the qualifying period to be prolonged; the engineering profession was already declaring that three years was too short a time for the real filices; and the modern linguists had obtained an additional year for study abroad. Once let early specialization go, so the argument ran, and the standard of the first degree would plummet. A simple reform of the sixth-form curriculum would ensure that boys and girls were required to study the two international languages of our time, mathematics and English, until they went to University. But an agreement can ever be reached on simple reforms. At a time when the power of the Colleges was declining, and when scholarship examinations had lost their original purpose, their influence persisted embodied in the secondary school curriculum. A sizeable part of the history of King's in the past hundred years is bound up with the development of the scholarship exams.

Another part of that history is more idiosyncratic. No college, perhaps, has done more to spread the gospel that to love the arts is the mark of a civilized man, and that we should translate what we learn from the arts into the way we live our life. The effect of this belief upon the history of our country—for good and for ill—is incalculable.

C. W. E. Bigsby is the editor of the recently published *Contemporary English Drama*, a collection of essays on aspects of the English theatre over the past two decades (1922pp. Edward Arnold, £10.50, 0 7131 6335 6). The volume appears as No 19 in the established Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, edited by Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, and complements and updates a similarly titled work in the series, published in 1962. Bigsby points out in his preface that the intervening period has seen remarkable changes in the theatre, and elaborates his theme in an introductory essay, "The Language of Crisis in British Theatre". Other contributors, including Arnold P. Hinchcliffe, Guido Almansi and Ruby Cohn examine the more recent work of Osborne, Pinter and Stoppard.

## The Muse à la mode

By John Bayley

VICTORIA GLENDINNING:

Edith Sitwell

Unicorn among Lions

393pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.  
£9.95.  
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Where cults and personalities are concerned there is a difference, and an important one, between style and fashion. Fashions in outlook and terminology, like the recent ones for Structuralism and its heirs, tend to die off quickly because the exponents lack a personal style (though Barthes was an exception). Followers and fellow-travellers of a fashion disappear with it or jump on the next bus. For the couturier *La Mode n'est jamais laide*. It is its period, or helps to make it, and stays with it after time has moved on. Time, as Auden wrote, "worsens language and furges everyone by whom it lives", but it also has a soft spot not only for the words but the performers, the sacred monsters of style.

Edith Sitwell must be admitted to have had both style and fashion. John Press wrote, perceptively, at the time of her late fame, that from a poetry reader's background "and the circles in which he moves, one can make a pretty fair guess at his attitude to Edith Sitwell". That was so once, but perhaps not today; in our attitude towards her we no longer have to show which cultural and social party we belong to. Victoria Glendinning begins with an anecdote illustrating this. A critic, don at a party, who had asked her what she was working on, said he hoped she would at least say what a dreadful poet Edith Sitwell was. Another academic, twenty years younger, demurred, saying that he had been reading "Gold Coast Customs" and was bowled over by it.

The first critic had been an undergraduate at Cambridge with Leavis, and Leavis had written in *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932) that "the Sitwells belong to the history of publicity rather than that of poetry". Himself an expert self-publicist, Leavis was of course well aware that much of the greatest poetry begins in the area of publicity, though eternity changes it into its true self. What now exists forever on the page began in what Donald Davie called "the poetry scene". The question is, does Edith Sitwell's exist as poetry, or only in the poetry scene of a bygone period? The distinction between the two is by no means clear-cut, either for Edith Sitwell or for many others, though Victoria Glendinning is a trifle disingenuous in claiming that she belongs both "to the history of poetry and the history of publicity". That does not answer the question, or refute Leavis, but it does indicate the falseness of his antithesis: for him any stick was good enough to beat the Sitwells.

I suspect that the second and younger academic, not a professional Eng Lit man, had the response to "Gold Coast Customs" that makes many readers suddenly "discover" poetry, not by reading "Lyricism" or a Shakespeare sonnet or "The Ode to a Nightingale", but through a sudden fascination with a poetic fashion scene, usually one just out of date. Fashion in this sense is self-renewing: the whole point about such public, public, and eternal, but private, "local" and exciting, but modern is where you find it, as Edith Sitwell herself "found" Lovelace's "La Bella Bona Roba" (and vulgarized it with her enthusiastic patronage). I recall in this context discovering at an early age Maurice Wollman's anthology *Modern Poetry*, and relishing everything in it, equally not indiscriminately—Moore, Aaronson, John Galsworthy (in real life as I now learn from this biography he was Terence Fytton Armstrong, a friend of Edith's) as well as "Snake", "The Hollow Men" and "From scars where kestrels hover". Also into my head entered these words:

The mature summer rain  
Is falling again . . .

The fashion of one's age and experience is in this sense dislodgeable, and its poetry as genuine as the Beatles. Indeed there is a very strong element of what used to be called "pop art" in Edith Sitwell's poetry. So far from being exquisite and upper-class-precious in her verse she is in fact anticipated, and not only in her recitations of "Fagade", the modern Monty Python idea of performance and the script, the poet as monster and virtuoso, and the monstrous and virtuosos as poet. Though she would have killed you for saying it she was an unconscious early exponent of throwaway poetry, the classless performance which draws the Russian public in hordes to hear Evtushenko and Voznesensky. The Dylan Thomas show was in alliance with her, and the poet was her friend. Teenagers in t-shirts who today read Ammann and Ashbery will certainly rediscover her. Like short skirts and art deco, she is a premier example of an imperishable vogue, the category of poetry that is simultaneously disposable and ripe for revaluation, that is at once both fashion and style.

Victoria Glendinning is right to plunge in *nudus res* on the question of how good a poet Edith Sitwell was, whether she has "importance". Not that the question is crucial to the success or failure of her biography, for important writers are not necessarily very interesting to read about. Humphrey Carpenter's recent biography of Auden was an expert and effective job but it did not reveal Auden, did not make him suddenly and graphically three-dimensional as a man. How could it, for Auden is immanent in his poetry, not in the details of how he lived. But the details of how Edith Sitwell lived are quite remarkably interesting, and revealing. That they should be and are so is itself a kind of comment on her poetry, for the poetry is not transcendent enough: our feelings about it, our reactions to it, are inevitably modified by an increase in knowledge about the kind of life that she led.

That is where this superb biography scores so heavily, for Victoria Glendinning is like a novelist: she is absorbed by monsters, their problems, their pathos, their insensate ambitions, their vulnerability, their insupportability. The reader in consequence is equally absorbed in every page she writes: perceiving among other things why it is that Proust can make us intimate with Charlus and Madame Verdurin, their passionate social and aesthetic involvements, while he leaves all dim, strange, and undisclosed the life of his true artists, Elstir, Vinteuil and Bergotte. This is a very better biography than her excellent one of Elizabeth Bowen, for that novelist, by being the kind of novelist she was, herself had turned much of the feel of her life into her art. Edith Sitwell was not capable of doing that, and would not in the least have wanted to do it. She was a genuinely strange phenomenon, locked up in herself, and needing sympathy and love to understand her, as a fictional character needs those elements in its creator.

Her poem, "The Sleeping Beauty", is the only version of the story in which the Prince never breaks into the palace to kiss the sleeper awake. Her own "Prince", the Russian painter Pavel Tchelitchew, known as Pavlik, with whom she was desperately in love for more than thirty years, was a homosexual who feared and disliked women as such: in the nature of things the kiss could never be given. Nor probably did she want it, for although not in the least a lesbian she tended to fall in love only with men who had no wish or capacity to love her physically as a woman (the painter "Chile" Guevara was such a soother).

Victoria Glendinning loyally calls "The Sleeping Beauty" her most beautiful poem, which does not seem to me to be the case, though it is certainly a revealing one. Her lack of passion as a poet seems an aspect both of her vulnerability and of her envy and fear of other poets, espe-

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inspiration. Such an achievement was not facile or meaningless, and one understands why mandarins like Maurice Bawa and Sir Kenneth Clark, with their unexpectedly sure understanding of popular taste and popular need, should have pronounced in the war years that Edith Sitwell "was now writing the greatest poems of our time". Such style belongs to its context, and it is hardly fair to depreciate it afterwards in the cold blood of the study.

What is facile about this poetry is not its stage-design imagery and theatre scale but its capacity for carrying a "message", of whatever kind the age finds appropriate. Unexpected as it might now seem, future literary historians may link the name of Edith Sitwell with those of Mayakovsky and Neruda as exponents of popular propaganda in the poetry of the period. Edith's preoccupation with "texture", though borrowed from Robert Graves, has much in common with Mayakovsky's sound arrangements. The original 1929 ending of "Gold Coast Customs" had a theme adopted from T. S. Eliot's poetry of a few years before.

But yet if only one soul would whine  
Rat-like from the lowest mud, I should  
That somewhere in god's vast love it  
would shine:  
But even the rat-whine has guttered low.

That was appropriate for the period. But in its war-time reprints later on the ending of the poem was changed.

Yet the time will come  
To the heart's dark sun  
When the rich man's gold and the rich  
man's wheat  
Will grow in the street that the starved  
may eat  
And the sea of the rich will give up its  
dead  
And the last blood and fire from my  
side will be shed.

For the fires of God go marching on.  
The accent is now that of Dylan Thomas, but more important the sentiment is once again appropriate to the style of its epoch: optimism replaces pessimism, evangelical fire the arid bitterness, but neither really means anything. "People will mix up poetry and intellect", proclaims Edith, going on to say that Keats was a great poet with no intellect.

Apart from the fact that Keats is a living embodiment of poetic intelligence, her attitude shows why it does not matter what her poetry says. "Why do you like Swinburne so much?" timidly inquired an undergraduate, when the great lady was lecturing at Somerville. "Isn't he rather lacking in ideas?" "If you want them," she was told, "when back to your Browning." But it is precisely the defect of her kind of non-ideological, "pure" poetry that it lends itself easily to any sentiments that seem suitable to the time.

This was comically demonstrated when she acquired a sudden post-war popularity with the far left, under the auspices of the young Australian Marxist Jack Lindsay. When Lindsay's wife read "Gold Coast Customs" at a big Hampstead gathering the Communist Party secretary, Harry Pollitt, was heard to observe over a tankard of beer that "the lass's heart was in the right place". So it was, oddly enough, but her poetry cannot be said to give any true indication of the fact. Lindsay wrote that the figures of Cain, Dives, Lazarus and Christ, as she recurrently used them, were basic symbols of the human condition and the forms of social struggle that make up history. She was happy to agree, though real poetry cannot afford to have any truck with phrases like "the human condition". In a sense such phrases are themselves fashions, slogans of the time, but not, always coming out of poetry and answerable only to it, as Auden's were. Edith's were true to the fashion in all respects, and in its context Jack Lindsay's enthusiasm and tutelage in her late middle age was exactly like the boost she had received from Brian Howard in her early thirties, when that egregious figure, still an Eton schoolboy, had expressed a devout admiration for her poetry, and had his admiration, as is rapidly returned when he saw her poems like the following, from "Baroque Noirs":

"Old, broken-down baroque  
that followed  
their splendour horses soundlessly,

And contained loads of young dead  
pruned up in outrageous  
positions.

That was his best, Edith had said, putting it into *Wheels*. The second line is indeed not bad at all, and somewhat along her own lines. It is equally true to a fashion, expressive of it, and determined by it. And yet in her young days, the days of "June, Jane, fall as a crane" and "When green as a river grew the barley", which so bewitched the young Allan Harper that she became Edith's friend and benefactor for life, Edith herself had been a fashion-setter. It was her misfortune that the older and more ambitious she grew the more she produced things of which the spotters of fashion and the pacemakers of ideology could merely make use, either with the patronage of flattery or in denigration.

Edith was excellent at attracting the ministrations of what Evelyn Waugh's circle used to call a "jagger". The word - a friend's name - does not sound like its meaning, which is one of those kind and fairly selfless persons who are prepared to make themselves ministrant to a celebrity, who fade away tactfully when not wanted and are always ready to be helpful when they are. Victoria Glendinning points out that Byron was particularly good at acquiring jagers, of both sexes, and a talent in that direction does seem to go with the kind of artist who depends on dramas and sensations, and whose art is engrossed in them and feeds off them, as both Pope and Byron's did. Jagers are particularly useful for people who fall in love with unsuitable characters, as Edith with Pavlik, and become enmeshed in their entourage, or who suffer as she did from appalling parents. But the real prop was her former governess, Helen Rootham, with whom she shared the sleazy flat in Bayswater which for years was her only home: even there she could barely afford the rent.

Helen too became a trial, though Edith was always fiercely loyal to her. She was by no means prepared to sit in the shadow of her ambitious friend and former pupil, but was determined to be an artist herself. "One of those terrifying forceful women" reported Brian Howard to Harold Acton, and he hastened to agree with each of her energetic pronouncements about art ("I always do when I meet music"). Edith managed to get in with Mrs Arnold Bennett, who as a well-known *décor* might be useful both to Helen and herself, but that did not work. Mrs Bennett soon left Edith see what she thought of Helen and was rewarded with a letter of staggering rudeness - a child's violent reaction to criticism. Edith's best friend (as Wyndham Lewis eloquently put it in *The Apes of God*, Edith "was still making mud pies at forty").

Your spiteful impertinence merely throws a most unpleasant light upon yourself. . . . As for her art, . . . do not do so to discuss Helen's art with you.

At failing, Edith did her best to push Helen's "extraordinarily illuminating lecture on Modern Consciousness as expressed in Music, Poetry, and Dancing". This, as the biographer succinctly observes, "sounds like hell", but it is a touching tribute to Edith's loyalty. Helen had for years been her only support against her parents, the philistines and "the Golde Horde", but Victoria Glendinning is so right to suggest that "a good genius, given enough time, will become a succubus". When Edith wasn't being martyred by Pavlik's tantrums, vanity, and jealousy - jealousy of her eventual success, so much more spectacular than his own - she was bearing the burden of her old governess, either at Penridge Villas or in an equally modest flat in Paris, where Helen eventually died by inches, racked by cancer. Edith herself was frequently ill, writing poetically to her school-girl French to a friend, "Je suis comme la femme dans le bible". This is not the kind of thing that has formed a part of the Sitwell legend, and one of the many virtues of this biography is the way it domesticates that legend, making it a great deal more interesting, and more worth a serious and studious consideration, much more a remarkable human case.

Young and old, Edith did of course suffer horribly from her parents, Sir George and Lady Ida. They, and particularly the father, attain their full monstrous status in the stately pages of Osbert's autobiography. But here again Victoria Glendinning's treatment dissolves the legend without debunking it, revealing a situation at once more complex and more commonplace. Life at Renishaw Park was not really such a mixture of F. G. Woodhouse and Charles Addams as the stories about it might suggest, though I rather like the one - also recounted by Anthony Powell - about Lady Ida sending the footman to ask Edith to sit with her. Edith tried to enlist for the chore her younger brother or his wife, and their equally marked lack of enthusiasm provoked the footman into protesting - "Well come on, one of you's got to go". Edith in fact was extremely kind to her mother, who in her later, even emptier years came to rely on her despised daughter increasingly for some sympathy and encouragement. The two had adjacent rooms at Renishaw, and Edith awoke one morning to hear her mother calling out, "Edie, have you ever been bird-happy?" The daughter's gift of tongues may have been handed down in some obscure way even from so unlikely a vessel as Lady Ida.

Funds were always short, and not only for Edith. She passed evenings at Renishaw sitting by the light of oil-lamps - no electricity was laid on - knitting long shapless woollen garments for herself or Helen and her brothers. Father, a fanatic teetotaler, never gave his guests anything to drink after dinner but entertained them with one of his favourite monologues like "Notting-ban to the Middle Ages". No wonder that after his permanent departure for Italy large glasses of gin were frequently in evidence: Edith herself increasingly took to the bottle in later years, after the strains and stresses of her American triumph and her lionizing by English academics. She was displeased with a friend who failed to put D. Litt on the envelope after the award of her first honorary degree, and as honours piled up she liked her mail to be addressed to Dr Sitwell with three D Litts added. Where *folle de grandeur* was concerned she was not her father's daughter, for nothing. Nor did Osbert escape inhabitation by the paternal incubus. In a letter to his sister-in-law, Georgia, Sacheverell's wife, a letter fully worthy of Sir George himself, he counsels greater efforts and economies.



"The Dancer", a bronze by Georg Kolbe, 1914: one of four striking photographs of this work, which was inspired by a performance of Nijinsky's, to be found along with other pieces of sculpture from Northern Europe, of all periods from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries, in the catalogue to the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard University (151pp. Abbeville Press, 505 Park Avenue, New York 10022. 0 89659 138 7).

course suffer horribly from her parents, Sir George and Lady Ida. They, and particularly the father, attain their full monstrous status in the stately pages of Osbert's autobiography. But here again Victoria Glendinning's treatment dissolves the legend without debunking it, revealing a situation at once more complex and more commonplace. Life at Renishaw Park was not really such a mixture of F. G. Woodhouse and Charles Addams as the stories about it might suggest, though I rather like the one - also recounted by Anthony Powell - about Lady Ida sending the footman to ask Edith to sit with her. Edith tried to enlist for the chore her younger brother or his wife, and their equally marked lack of enthusiasm provoked the footman into protesting - "Well come on, one of you's got to go". Edith in fact was extremely kind to her mother, who in her later, even emptier years came to rely on her despised daughter increasingly for some sympathy and encouragement. The two had adjacent rooms at Renishaw, and Edith awoke one morning to hear her mother calling out, "Edie, have you ever been bird-happy?" The daughter's gift of tongues may have been handed down in some obscure way even from so unlikely a vessel as Lady Ida.

"I admire greatly your devotion to Sachie and the children, and hope now . . . he will settle down and work. And that you will also settle down and learn to manage his affairs for him". Arnold Bennett, who had great affection for the trio, wrote in 1913 of their "gentle, quiet, surprised, ruthless demeanour". That was Edith in concert with her brothers, her tantrums could be as extreme as her tenderness. She adored a Terrible Tea Party, and frequently organized them at the Sessame Club, the women's club in London to which she regularly donated an unending feast of gossip. The most spectacular occasion was a dinner for the Dylan Thomases, Elliot, John Hynward and others, at which a very drunk Caitlin split ice cream on her arm and commanded Hayward to lick it off. He replied he would lick it off any part of her but not at the Sessame, to which she retorted - "Mother of God! The insults of men! You great pansy!" - and was led out. Dylan, equally drunk, was meanwhile pouring scorn over Elliot for deprecating Milton - "... and look here. Why does a poet like you publish such awful poetry? You know it's bad". In a more unbridled society this sort of thing would excite little comment; Edith clearly revelled in it, and in regaling her friends with it in letters, because childhood had not only arrested her but split her between *grande dame* and gleeful little girl. About Elliot she was as possessive and sometimes as abusive as a child, as on the occasion of his second marriage ("Ob what a beast Tom is!").

If it is hard to take her later work seriously this is partly because she often appears in it like an awkward little girl dressed in a queen's finery. Ivy Compton-Burnett said she had "become a mixture of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Queen Elizabeth". But surely it was right to applaud, as she does, a charade, generously if with tongue in cheek. And a child excites love. In any pose, for "to reject her poetry was to reject her". Stephen Spender was right to say in his obituary of her that "poems survive because people fall in love with them". Even when portentous ("And still falls the rain...") she could excite affection; more subtle, and more spontaneous, is that of *poes* memory for the child in the enchanted park where

The naive summer rain  
Is falling again . . .

# Competing communities

By Michael Banton

PETER RATCLIFFE:  
Racism and Reaction  
A Profile of Handsworth  
388pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£12.50.  
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"Whatever injustice or imperfection exists within a society will be brought to light by the presence of a group thought of as different, and particularly so if they are visibly different." The words are those of the wisest of commentators, Philip Mason, in the thoughtful essay with which, eleven years ago, he concluded his world-wide survey of racial relations. Countless like Britain, he said, can solve the problems of their coloured minorities only by solving their own. "What is needed is a society in which inequality is minimized, seen to be necessary, and seen to be compatible with justice. This can perhaps only occur in a society with a clear common purpose."

Like those who, in *The Fable of the Bees*, foolishly cried "Good Gods, had we but Honesty!" we can too easily deplore the lack of a common purpose of national level in modern Britain and forget what great evils have been perpetrated in the name of such a purpose. What matters just as much, as Mason recognized, is that life in industrial cities separates people from one another and does not easily bring members of different ethnic groups together in the pursuit of shared goals.

The working-class communities of early industrialism are not being replaced. When individuals evaluate their position and prospects they look not just to those in their immediate neighbourhood but also to the television-screen, which celebrates the consumer society and parades the violence first of Vietnam, then Watts and Balfast, and now Toxteth. The restrictions upon resort to violence in small-scale social relations dissolve as the scale is increased, and young men who see little for which to strive find a common purpose in attacking groups who wear a different colour or the uniform of the police and the fire service.

The imperfections of contemporary British society are most evident in the inner-city areas of Victorian housing planned before the era of the motor-car and now sliced across by the lines of through traffic. It is not the physical conditions which are the roots of trouble, for there are areas in underdeveloped countries where basic amenities of clean water and sanitation are scarce yet the inhabitants live in hope. Nor are the first-generation immigrants to inner-city neighbourhoods so dissatisfied with them. The older white residents may be bitterly resentful about the environmental decline and blame the immigrants, yet the major social imperfections are not contained within the local neighbourhood. They stem from the processes by which citizens seek groups with whom they can share a common purpose and the processes of comparison which have lifted their expectations.

The inner-city area of Birmingham with the highest concentration of New Commonwealth immigrants is Handsworth, where, in 1971, of every ten residents one was born in the Indian sub-continent. From 1974 to 1977 it was the subject of a major research project led by John Rex designed to discover whether members of the minorities were catching up with the majority in the competition for jobs, houses and schooling. When the immigrants arrive they are unable to compete on equal terms since they do not possess the same skills, but some of the differences can be speedily reduced. Some immigrants are capable of catching up with their competitors in a decade, and in any event the children should be as well placed as the majority of children in the neighbourhood schools. If they have not attained equality by this stage the most likely explanation is that of racial discrimination.

A first report on this research

appeared in a book by Professor Rex and Sally Tomlinson, *Colonial Immigrants in a British City*. Peter Ratcliffe, who had special responsibility for analysing the results of the large-scale survey which formed the core of the project, now seeks to complement that book with another which sets out some of the findings in greater detail and is, unfortunately, decidedly dull. Dr Ratcliffe was not responsible for the design of the interview schedule and is properly sceptical of the meaning of some of the responses. For example, ninety per cent of the Asians (and two-thirds of the West Indians) told the interviewers they were satisfied with life in Britain. Maybe they were. But the Asians could have been saying that they were satisfied with life lived within an Asian community located inside British society. Or they could have been giving the answer they thought would please the white interviewer. If a research worker wants to explore questions such as this, or why people migrated, or how life in Britain compares with what they expected, or how they think "people of different types and nationalities" get on together in Handsworth, then he needs to use a much more sophisticated technique than a doorstep interview.

Yet Ratcliffe's scepticism assumes some funny forms. For example - and it is an example, if an exaggerated one, of a kind of comment that runs through his book - he records that a significant number of respondents from both the black and the Asian minorities expressed favourable attitudes towards the level of individual freedom accorded to British citizens. Anxious not in this way to diminish the importance of discrimination, he adds that the experience of persecution may not dislodge a belief in the British sense of fair play, and continues "Furthermore, those who had experienced the harshest effects of partition and expulsion from East Africa can perhaps be forgiven for reflecting in this view". How righteous the author is! The consciousness of his political rectitude! How Olympian his judgment when he limits the proviso to those who had experienced only the harshest effects! How grudging an afterthought lies behind that "perhaps"! He is judging their responses not from any understanding of their earlier lives but from a prior conviction about what life is really like for racial minority members in Britain whether they realise it or not. It is not the Asians who need forgiveness.

Are the blacks and Asians in Handsworth catching up with the whites in respect of access to good housing? Ratcliffe cannot furnish a simple answer to such a question because he is limited to discussing survey findings which provide a snapshot of the position at a particular moment in time and cannot capture the processes at work or directly identify the obstacles to advancement. Seventeen per cent of the Asian householders lacked access to an inside WC; one family in eight had no fixed bath or shower; one-twelfth of Asian owner-occupiers had no hot water in their property. There is no question that the minority members start off in the worst conditions, but the important question is whether this represents a starting-point or a trap in which the least successful get permanently caught.

Ratcliffe contends that blacks (in which he includes Asians) "may not have acquired equal bargaining rights in the (housing) market place when compared to those who ostensibly share their 'class' position". Leaving aside that strange qualification "may", what is his evidence? It is scarcely novel. West Indians have difficulty accumulating capital so they wait for council houses, but then many of them move out into houses of their own - 66 per cent in the survey area were owner-occupiers compared with 50 per cent of whites. Asians often raise the necessary capital within the family and few of them seek council houses; 82 per cent in the survey were owner-occupiers. The author falls over himself to caution the reader that the houses they have purchased may be of inferior quality, or on short leases or in clearance areas, and to correct anybody who could possibly have misinterpreted David Smith's lucid presentation of the national picture in *Racial Disadvantage in Britain*. What is more important is his warning that the white population of the area is declining by mortality and by emigration; their places are likely to be taken by second-generation blacks. The area will then be even more unfavourably stereotyped and this will reinforce the disadvantages of its residents.

It is a beyond question that there are trends in worry about what the evidence about unequal bargaining rights? We know from other studies that in the private market minority house-purchasers have on average to pay 5 per cent more and to spend more time searching, so their bargaining position (a concept easier to understand than that of a bargaining right) is definitely weaker, but Ratcliffe does not mention them and has no comparable data of his own. Nor does he build a case with respect to the council-house sector, though among those interviewed in the survey whites who said they were on the waiting-list had apparently been waiting for a shorter period than West Indian respondents.

## In passing

On television, a sophisticated computer  
Refers in passing  
To 'your pseudo-intellectuals' . . .

So much for you, Messrs So and Sol  
I congratulate him on his input,  
On the riches in his memory banks,  
I would love to meet his transmitters.

Of old there were articles called  
Accumulators,  
Always in need of charging and topping up.  
Most of the know-how they imparted  
Was spent on them.  
It took so long then, to accumulate.

Later, cleverness made great strides,  
From O levels to Ph.D.s.  
Pseudo-intellectuals were preferred to  
Real dopes,  
Always in need of charging and topping up.

But cybernetics is a brand new world.  
Robots have seven-league boots.  
Now we have real intellectuals  
And pseudo-people.

O for the crystal set, virtually wireless!  
And the ghost in the machine that we tickled  
Into telling.

D. J. Enright

Are the blacks and Asians in Handsworth catching up with the whites in competition for the better jobs? The answer here is more clearly in the negative. It is officially agreed that unemployment among racial minority workers, particularly women, has increased at a faster rate than unemployment in general. There is some reason to suspect that when people lose their jobs, the minority workers are more ready than the whites to move down a step and take an inferior job. In the Handsworth survey two-thirds of the West Indian sample had been in their present jobs for at least five years so there was then considerable stability among those employed; a few had been able to move up to more skilled or better-paid jobs but none had obtained white-collar positions and many fewer blacks than whites had been offered internal promotion; the differences could not be explained by differences in qualifications.

One of the major routes by which a minority can catch up is by political activity, best of all by performing a balancing act between two parties which compete for their support. Blacks and Asians in Britain are in no good position to play off one party against another though their vote may well have been crucial in some constituencies. In the Handsworth survey 70 per cent of Asian men said they had voted Labour in the 1974 election and the figure for West Indian men was not far behind. The white respondents preferred the Conservatives to Labour, perhaps because many of them blamed Labour for the changes in character of the neighbourhood. Whether second-generation black Britons will be as keen as their fathers to go to the polls is doubtful. The indications are that young blacks and Asians see their future as lying within Handsworth and in communities of their own ethnic background. At present they both, and particularly the Asians, see education as an important route for advancement, but those hopes may wither if well-qualified youngsters are not able to break through into better jobs in sufficient numbers.

There is at present a tendency in use the word "community" loosely, especially in phrases such as the "white community" and the "black community". The groups which in the past have been identified as local communities have all contained within themselves major conflicts, but the members have been forced to cooperate with one another from time to time by their shared circumstances. In places like Handsworth there are several Asian communities based upon religion and ethnic background; there is an emergent black community and only the remnants of a white community or communities. In much of their lives people look outwards to national and international affairs; local life seems drab and unworthy by comparison. Our rulers cannot now use the idea of a homogeneous nation as a way of retaining the loyalty of the less successful; they turn instead to ideas of human and civil rights as a way of formulating common purpose. It is easy to proclaim that people have some new night, but this is a useless exercise unless means are found to get others to acknowledge corresponding responsibilities. This may be impossible in a market economy unregulated by the constraints of community, but taking allocation out of the market and giving it to officials can lead to higher levels of discrimination. Present-day political rhetoric only conceals the difficulties of satisfying popular expectations while we depend so much upon economic incentives.

Dr Ratcliffe's survey results are already five years old but everything that has happened since his research was conducted tends to support the conclusion that what Britain's multi-racial neighbourhoods are now doing is to bring into focus our country's most fundamental problems. They reveal the social injustices and imperfections that people in other neighbourhoods would sooner overlook.

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# Disappearance and after

By Bernard Wasserstein

JACOBO TIMERMAN:

Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number

Translated by Toby Talbot

184pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

£7.95.

0 297 77995 X

This is a testimony from the city of the dead - the Kafkaesque nether-world inhabited by the disappeared ones - of contemporary Argentina. Their exact number is (by the very nature of the phenomenon) unknowable, but it is certain that thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, have fallen victim to this bizarre form of kidnapping by para-state, paramilitary, para-police (or a string of other para-legal) freebooters, operating under the benevolent blind eye of the military government which seized power in March 1976. Few have reappeared alive, and fewer still have dared to defy their captors by telling the tale: hence the grim significance of Jacobo Timerman's story.

Born in the Ukraine in 1923, Timerman was taken to Argentina at the age of five. From 1971 to 1977 he was editor and publisher of *La Opinión*, a liberal opposition paper which devoted special attention to issues of human rights and government illegality. Unlike the common rule of newspapermen in Latin American dictatorships, Timerman disdained to take refuge in the foggy euphemisms and vague allusions which define the frontiers of press freedom in much of the continent. His newspaper, as he puts it, "used

precise language to describe actual situations so that its articles were comprehensible and direct". It was apparently for this "capital sin" that he was arrested in Buenos Aires in April 1977.

Timerman's arrest was the work of an extremist right-wing army group operating without formal legal authority, named in one of the many unofficial prisons established under the military regime, he was subjected to electric-shock torture, beatings, a variety of humiliations and lengthy interrogations. In September 1977 a military tribunal declared that there were no charges against him and that he could go free. Nevertheless he remained under house arrest by order of the military junta. Eventually, in September 1979, the Supreme Court ordered his release; the junta decided to defy the Court and arrest its members, the President of Argentina, General Videla, said that if the Court was forced to resign he too would do so. Finally, Timerman's citizenship was annulled, his goods confiscated, and he was expelled from the country after the manner of Solzhenitsyn.

The genre of prison literature often reflects the experience of imprisonment itself in its endless repetitiveness. Timerman's account tends to stick to the sombre path beaten by his predecessors from Silvio Pellico onwards. What lends a distinctive edge to his book is the manic political framework within which it is set. Timerman argues that his captors formed "the heart of Nazi operations in Argentina", and that "an all-embracing arsenal of Nazi ideology" constituted part of the structure of the military regime, and that his gaolers seemed convinced that World War III had

broken out, that Argentina was its chosen terrain, and that they were engaged in the front-line against a world-wide leftist terrorist conspiracy. Timerman (whose own newspaper initially supported the idea of an anti-Peronist military coup designed to stamp out political violence) traces the decline of the political system, under the impact of this ideology, into an arena of ruthless warfare.

The strange universe of extra-legal legality into which Timerman fell is illustrated by the account of an interview between Timerman and the Argentine Minister of the Interior during his period of detention.

Minister: You admitted to being a Zionist, and this point was revealed at a meeting of all the generals.

Timerman: But being a Zionist is not forbidden.

Minister: No, it isn't forbidden, but on the other hand it isn't a clear-cut issue. Besides, you admitted to it. And the generals are aware of this.

*The Through the Looking-Glass* logic is of a piece with the sad collapse of coherent political discourse in post-Peron Argentina.

Timerman's book was accorded a tremendous response in the United States upon its publication there a few months ago, and was rapidly pressed into service by opponents of President Reagan's policy towards Latin America. The rhetoric of human rights has been replaced by a "quiet diplomacy" which claims to distinguish between "authoritarian" regimes of the right and "totalitarian" ones of the left. Washington officials in recent weeks have put it out that there have been no recorded disappearances in Argentina this

year, and that the number of political prisoners held without charge or trial has dropped from 8,000 in 1976 to 900 this year. On this basis has arisen the concept of a South Atlantic Treaty Organization which would comprise the United States, Argentina, South Africa, and other anti-communist countries. Timerman's view that "quiet diplomacy is surrender" has been cited with some effect by enemies of these and other such notions now emanating from Washington. Timerman's presence at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearings on President Reagan's nomination of Ernest W. Lefever as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs played a part in the almost unprecedented Senatorial rejection of a presidential nominee. Even in exile Timerman clearly remains a force to reckon with.

Timerman now works as a journalist in Israel. His book tells us nothing of his new life there, although it may seem a strange moment for this social democrat (converted to Socialist Zionism in his youth by emissaries of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsair, the left-socialist Zionist party - an episode which he recalls with lyrical nostalgia) to arrive, albeit involuntarily, in Mr Begin's Israel. One wonders whether he would have chosen to go voluntarily just now, and whether his rather old-fashioned (some might say simple-minded) brand of civic virtue may not seem out of place in the new Israel. It is as a powerful first-hand testament of one who has, as it were, returned from the dead, rather than as a political analysis, that this book impresses. In its resistance to ideologies mired in paranoia Timerman's perhaps quixotic civil courage cannot fail to inspire, if not hope, at least a profound respect.

Drawing on personal experience, Kopelev is able to demonstrate not only how ruthless and brutal these policies were, but also how they disoriented, corrupted and ultimately destroyed nearly all the people caught up in them, either as instruments or victims. Particularly effective is the double focus illuminates the thoughts, feelings and motives of the participants, while mercilessly revealing, with the benefit of hindsight, how fatally deluded they so often were, and how lethal were the results of these delusions. Nor does Kopelev spare himself in reciting his woeful litany, although it is clear that sheer honesty and generosity of spirit saved him from the worst excesses of his peers.

Unfortunately, the book is afflicted with a translation of such grotesque and egregious incompetence that only by a miracle does anything of the original survive at all. Yet readers who persevere with it will find their efforts rewarded, especially in the concluding chapters, which offer yet further evidence of the human costs of this monstrous experiment that failed.

As part of their Casebook Series on European Politics and Society, Allen and Unwin have just published *The Communist Parties of Italy, France and Spain: Past and Present Change and Continuity*. 355pp. £22.50 paperback, £39.95 0 04 33033 7. Edited by Peter Lange and Maurizio Varnicelli, of the Centre for European Studies, Harvard University, the book assembles key documents relating to Western European Communist parties from 1945 onwards under five main headings: "National Roads to Socialism", "Alliance Policy", "The Party", "The International Communist Movement", and "The Parties and the International System". As Stanley Hoffmann points out in his foreword, the documents - which include reports, newspaper articles, and speeches by Togliatti, Berlinguer and Togliatti - should help readers to arrive at an independent view of the complex evolution of Eurocommunism.

# The image of authority

By Paul Johnson

RICHARD CLUTTERBUCK:

The Media and Political Violence

191pp. Macmillan. £15.

0 333 31484 0

The most disturbing aspect of the recent street violence in Britain is the extraordinary animosity shown towards the police by large numbers of young people. Still more sinister is the extent to which this trend is encouraged by Labour politicians in responsible posts, such as the Leader of the Greater London Council. The popularity of the police has always been the keystone in the arch of British stability. As Richard Clutterbuck says in his admirable new book, the police, with the possible exception of doctors, "enjoy the highest public regard of any profession in Britain". As recently as 1975, he reports, a comprehensive three-year survey of public attitudes showed that such questions as "do you respect/trust/like the police?" and "are you satisfied with the police?" evoked "yes" responses ranging from 90 to 98 per cent. Is this approval being eroded? And, if so, who is responsible?

General Clutterbuck's book, I should point out, covers a wider field than this single topic. Yet it is the most important connecting thread in his survey of British public order during the 1970s, and it throws into sharper relief his primary concern with the part played by the media. He demonstrates, pretty convincingly, that certain groups in our society do have an interest in promoting hostility towards the police, and that television (though not the press) makes it much easier for them to accomplish their object.

For those seeking to destroy established society it is important to shatter the image of the police as an impartial body upholding the law in the interests of all, and to present them as a political instrument of the possessing classes. One way to do this is by modern forms of picketing, which came into use during the 1970s. A shop-steward told Clutterbuck that he found it necessary to arouse hatred to get his members "involved in the struggle". As he put it: "My lady regard the police as their friends. I have to convince them that they are enemies. There is nothing like a bit of violence to do that, provided that they blame the police and not me for starting it."

The invention of the flying pickets and mass-picketing played an important part in this process. The man who popularized these two devices, and employed them most ruthlessly, was Arthur Scargill, who, as Clutterbuck shows, has also been adept at getting the media to reinforce his efforts and underlie his triumphs. It is of the essence of the respect for police authority that they should be seen not merely as a moral force but as an irresistible one. In February 1972, during the miners' strike, Scargill organized a mass-picket of 15,000 which forced a timorous Chief Constable to close down Salford Depot, the Gas Board's last major stockpile of gas coke. Scargill's victory in the "battle of Salford" was a political triumph for the nation, for it helped the miners to win their inflationary claim, and this was a turning-point in the hyper-inflation of the 1970s. But it was also a humiliation for the police. As Clutterbuck puts it, "The gates [of the depot] were physically closed by a senior police officer in front of the television cameras so the incident was made into a symbolic public surrender of the police to the power of the mass picket." In the long run this aspect of the defeat may have been the most damaging to the public interest.

Of course militant picketing, as Clutterbuck demonstrates, also damages the image of trade unions in the public mind and may even defeat the object of a particular strike. He cites the case of Grunwick, in 1976-77, where the union involved, APEX, in an attempt to attract attention to its

flattering case, persuaded four of its sponsored MPs, including Shirley Williams and two other ministers, to appear on the picket-line in May 1977. This brought in not only the media but the militant left (including Scargill) and led to the appalling scenes of violence of June-July 1977. As a result of intensive press and television coverage, public sympathy swung to the workers who defied the pickets, and the union was humiliated. Again, during the ferocious picketing early in 1979, media exposure of union violence worked against the strikers and their political backers and accounted for the substantial size of the Tory electoral victory in May. In both cases the police emerged, in the minds of the public as a whole, with reputation enhanced.

Yet this is a risk the anti-police radicals are prepared to take provided that, by creating violent episodes, they enlist a substantial minority of activists for whom warfare with the police is almost a way of life. Moreover, the more violence, the greater the chances that individual policemen or groups of police will themselves behave violently and illegally and thus present occasions for enlisting the media in their anti-police campaign. Clutterbuck describes the successful efforts of the Socialist Workers' Party to raise the level of violence in 1977, not only at Grunwick's but in Lewisham and Ladywood, some 357 police being injured in these encounters. The SWP was likewise prominent in the 1979 Southall riot, in which ninety-seven police were hurt.

Clutterbuck also gives details of an episode in March 1976 in which the SWP, in its earlier incarnation as the International Socialists, deliberately ambushed a small force of police at West Hendon and beat up a Chief Inspector, a sergeant and six constables. He says the editor of *Socialist Worker*, Paul Foot, and four cameramen were positioned at a nearby vantage-point to get pictures of the police counter-attacking, showing them in violence postures. The paper's presses were standing by for an all-night run to produce a special issue publicizing a rally. According to Clutterbuck: "Forty-one police men were injured, three of them seriously. Though none of the marchers was seriously hurt, the impression given by the pictures was that of policemen attacking the marchers. Apart from Paul Foot and these four photographers, there were no other reporters or cameramen present and, whether this was by accident or design, it had the effect of ensuring that the only photographs which reached the national press were those selected by this same group."

This is by no means the only occasion when the police have been deliberately attacked, though it is usually done under cover of a planned encounter with the National Front. In August 1977 at Lewisham, where the SWP organized a counter-demonstration to an NF march, most of the fifty-six injuries inflicted on policemen occurred after the NF had left the area by special train. Again, at Ladywood two weeks later, it was the SWP who attacked the police, injuring fifty-eight of them, six of them grievously. This political use of anti-police violence is particularly serious since it appears deliberately designed to involve young blacks in encounters with the police.

Clutterbuck's book shows that television, and especially the BBC, is far more likely to fall for anti-police propaganda than the press. Thus, after the battle in Southall in April 1979 between the extreme-left Nazi League and the police, the BBC allowed an organization called the "Southall Campaign Committee" to make an "Open Door" programme, which included a number of unsubstantiated allegations against the police. The BBC then blandly offered the police the right to reply - "an empty offer", as Clutterbuck says, "since the police could not edit or make specific statements on a

programme on a subject which might result in criminal charges in which they would present the evidence for prosecution."

This was merely one episode in what sometimes looks like a general vendetta against the police waged by the BBC. Eldon Griffiths, parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation, told the Commons in May 1980: "I believe we are in the presence of a concerted campaign in the fringe of politics, in the media and occasionally in this House, to denigrate the police service. . . . No organ of opinion in this country has done more to disseminate and circulate these mendacious than the BBC." Clutterbuck does not go so far as that. But he is critical of the recent documentary and fictional presentation of the police by the BBC. Among programmes that he singles out are the series of four plays transmitted in 1978 under the title *Law and Order*. These fictions, showing the police in the worst possible light, were given documentary significance in a *Radio Times* background article, and some viewers who switched on late were under the impression that they were watching a documentary about an actual case of wrongful conviction.

The deliberate undermining of the reputation of the police in Britain and the violence in Ulster are connected at a number of levels, the irresponsibility of the BBC being one of them. "Between 1971 and 1979", Clutterbuck writes, "there were six BBC television interviews with members of the Irish terrorist organizations (IRA, INLA and UVF) and many more with their legal front organizations." As he says, the public "gained nothing" from the interview with the INLA, who claimed to have murdered Airey Neave, but the "gained" "immense" publicity and prestige. He thinks it likely that "this publicity coup goaded the IRA into matching it by murdering Earl Mountbatten". He asserts flatly that television interviews with terrorists or spokesmen for illegal and criminal organizations "should never be given".

With all that we can agree. Less plausible is General Clutterbuck's remedy, which is the creation of a professional institute for the Mass Media, on the lines of similar legal and medical bodies, with a strict code of conduct and powers of expulsion. The proposal is presented abruptly and none of the many serious objections to it are discussed. In the light of Clutterbuck's own evidence, the media are only one of the various factors which tend to stimulate or aggravate violence, trade-union extremism and fringe political groups (with rare exceptions) being rather more important. The answer therefore lies in the generalised field of the criminal law. It is surprising that Clutterbuck does not discuss the legal problem of what constitutes an incitement to violence or riot, which lies at the heart of the matter. Recent events suggest it is here that the law is weak, or at least inadequately enforced. The mere presence of a television camera, as well as a broadcast, can be an incitement, and it is important that television mandarin, as well as extremist politicians and publicists of all kinds, should be made to realize that, in entering the arena of potential violence, they do so at their own great and personal peril. Nothing, I hazard, would provoke the media to deeper reflection on its responsibilities than the spectacle of the Director-General of the BBC (who is also its Editor-in-Chief) being hauled off to gaol.

*Retrospections on Social Psychology* edited by Leon Festinger (297pp. Oxford University Press. £7.95. 0 19 502751 5) is a collection of two essays on recent research into social psychology, and the control of human groups. Among the topics covered are "The Role of Social Psychology in Population Control", "The Causes of Behaviour" and "Fifty Years of

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# Proletarian distempers

By J. R. Vincent

DOUGLAS C. RICHTER:  
Riotous Victorians  
196pp. Ohio University Press.  
£8.95 (paperback, £3.40).  
0 8214 0571 3

The working class in the nineteenth century played a walk-on part. That is, it walked on, it rioted, and it returned to work. It did not spend the century in an anarchistic attempt to found the Labour Party, nor even in a less anarchistic struggle against privilege. What militancy it showed was turned on and off like a tap by the vicissitudes of the trade and electoral cycles. Worse still, from the point of view of twentieth-century "democratic" historiography, proletarian distempers (to use Beatrice Webb's phrase for the General Strike) did not run on the approved progressive timelines. Popular behaviour was characterized by polynomic irrationalism. One year the rights of the "richborne" might be in fashion, the next it might be the claims of the Anti-Vaccinationists. (The first government incursions into preventive medicine, over VD in garrison towns and over compulsory vaccination, both had to be abandoned in the face of a tumultuous vox populi.) One ritual, however, where popular riot never faltered was in the matter of voting.

Donald Richter has studied 452 disturbances in the tranquil period between 1865 and 1914. This challenges the idea that lawlessness ended soon after compulsory police forces were established by the Act of 1856. It does not, of course, mean that lawlessness became politically important. Rioting is a rather collusive, conservative activity which establishes, indeed dissolves, the essential authority of government, while allowing it to make marginal concessions; the facetious phrase "ritualized pseudo-conflict" trembles on one's lips. Richter in fact concentrates on the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, and omits the late Victorian and Edwardian period, when race and anti-immigrant riots became interesting (Asquith had to ban a world heavyweight contest between a black and a white because of the disastrous effects if the black had won).

The topics treated include the Fenian terrorism of the 1860s, which involved conspiracy and terrorism rather than riot. This adds little to the standard works on Fenianism, though the daring attempt to seize Chester Castle by a coup in 1867 certainly bears retelling. As to the blowing up of Clerkenwell prison, it appears that Dublin Castle gave explicit particulars of what was the offering to Scotland Yard, who then let it happen. There is an original chapter on the riots caused by the Protestant demagogue Murphy in the

1860s, until he was killed by the Irish Catholic miners of Cumberland. The Hyde Park riots, which so distressed Matthew Arnold, are studied both in terms of official policy and of what happened on the spot. Here there was probably a greater element of collusion and pre-arrangement between Cabinet and the Reform League in connection with the demonstration of May 6, 1867, than Richter suggests; but he is right to hint that the mob which frightened the Cabinet was that to be found in the Carlton Club. The involvement of troops on three occasions in 1866-67 should be noted. There is a chapter on the Salvation Army riots of the 1880s and 1890s which breaks new ground. The West End riots of February 1886 are clearly charted, stone by stone, helmet by helmet.

More generally, there is a discussion of the growth of the "demonstration" (the term dates from the 1860s), and the restraints upon it, especially in connection with the controversy about the banning of meetings in Trafalgar Square in 1887-92. In the background to all this is a low hum of minor disturbances - fairs, riots, election riots, industrial riots - often in rather unlikely places. Exeter, Torquay, Lyme Regis, Newton Abbot, Leamington, Salisbury, Basingstoke, Eastbourne - all these produced problems of law and order beyond the reach of ordinary police power. The Home Secretary of the period might find his "front line" anywhere, not just in the inner cities.

Can Richter's hook be safely put into the hands of a young person? It is pleasantly produced, with good Victorian maps of central London, but I confess to doubts. The proof-reading is not at the best. Words like "uniquely", "authoritative", and "anthemium" appear. And we find "Michelstoun" for Michelstoun. Commons, without the definite article: Huntington, for Huntingdon; Corney, for Corry; J. L. Gavitt, for Garvin; Willenhead, for (I suppose) Willenhall; an odd allusion to the High Church preferences of Harcourt, that great anti-clerical and earnest; a belief that Gathorne Hardy is hyphenated, when (despite the *DNB*) the title-page of the authorized biography shows otherwise; a reference to the Welsh borough of Dungarvan, which is in Ireland; a quaint phrase about "the French Catholic threat" in the 1790s. He also ascribes *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* to Terence (*recte* Juvenal). A faint if unmistakable whiff of American authorship here: a point I dwell on merely to point out, esuriently, that England will soon be full of unfrocked academics who for a derisory sum will be only too glad to give it final lick of point to American academic nothing. Our errors (for we too have them) are pardonable; theirs are not, for they could pay us to eliminate them.

The adult reader will be undisturbed by such pedantries, and will find large food for thought in the

issues raised. He will note the phenomenon of the anti-mob as particularly important. In 1848, 170,000 Special Constables enrolled in London against the Chartist; 113,000 were enlisted against the Fenians in 1867; 30,000 Londoners volunteered to support the police in 1887. These were not necessarily middle-class mobs. The entire workforce of the Manchester gasworks, the lowest of the low, enlisted against the Fenians. The authorities were always able to exploit a general inclination to see a bit of action on the streets. Likewise, the rioters were strangely apt to cheer the Guards regiments who were ostensibly standing by to cut them down, and to close banned meetings by singing "God Save the Queen". The mob was normally patriotic, peaceable, and had high standards of personal behaviour. The West End riots of 1886 were instigated by a member of the Carlton Club making an unacceptably indecorous sign to the mob below, a breach of etiquette that could not be allowed to pass without reproof.

The mob, far from challenging conventional opinion, was most active when acting to enforce it, either as partisans in elections, or as even-handed opponents of Rome and the Salvation Army. In 1882, eighty-six Salvationists were imprisoned for provoking disorder, and 660 injured by the mob. An organization of "youths of the lowest class", the Skeleton Army, was formed to break up the Salvationists, with discreet assistance and approval from respectable quarters. The anti-Catholicism of the period likewise can be only condemned for taking too seriously the official beliefs of society. If the Irish were not only sworn to hatred of us on earth, but condemned to perdition hereafter, what, except enthusiasm, could be wrong with the destruction of two chapels, one hall, one school, and over 110 houses in the Catholic ghetto at Ashton?

Home Secretaries and police came well out of the question of public order. The former were generally libertarian, the latter more sinned against than sinning, their worst failure being usually not heeding on the right spot, as in the 1886 riots when the main body of police was sent to the Mall by mistake for Pall Mall, with another large body in reserve at Scotland Yard, leaving the West End wide open for looting. The Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police wrote temperately in 1886, "That is one of our difficulties at all these public meetings: we are bound to show as few police as possible - it produces excitement and irritation, and directly you show police you give a bigger crowd than ever." Lord Scarman's current enthusiasm for the Kerner Report is a rediscovery of what was obvious to the Victorian bobby.

From first to last there was no legal framework for free assembly. Where free speech had a statutory basis, as in Hyde Park from 1872 and in Trafalgar Square from 1892, it

This photograph of a bronze by Gamon Adams of Sir Charles James Napier, the conqueror of Sind; is taken from Helen Smalke's *Scottish Empire: Scots in pursuit of Hope and Glory* (1979, Scottish National Portrait Gallery/HMSO, £3. 0 11 491743 4).

was a strictly defined and limited position of the will of the strong, including restraint of lawful actions if the strong demand it clamorously enough? There is much to be said, after all, for consistently crushing the weaker side; it can be done, which is no small merit. Richter's study of the Home Office dossiers shows that the authorities were sometimes libertarian, sometimes authoritarian, in their approach to individual cases, but that there was no coherent general view of free assembly and public order in their departmental outlook. From the point of view of the great British public, the right to stop other people expressing their opinions appears to have been at least as important historically as the supposed right to meet to express one's own views; and looked at in detail through the Home Office windows, the idea of a "free" late Victorian Britain becomes as dubious a piece of political folk culture as the comparable notion that the national church was Protestant.

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# Saint Malachy's alumnus

By Brian Moore

MICHAEL TIERNY:

Eoin MacNeill: Scholar and Man of Action, 1867-1945  
409pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £22.50  
0 19 822440 0

In the late 1930s, when I was a junior day boy at Saint Malachy's College, Belfast, there was a discussion in class about the school's most distinguished ex-pupils. A senior boy put forward the name of Eoin MacNeill, saying that he was an internationally known historian, a founder of the Gaelic League, the man who conceived and brought about the formation of the Irish Volunteers, which was the main force in Ireland's struggle for independence. "Besides," the boy said, "he was from my part of the world, the Glens of Antrim." This drew a cheer, but the master at once grew bitter. "People always mention MacNeill," the master said, "but, as far as a lot of us are concerned, he's the man who countermanded the order for the Easter Rising in 1916. And don't forget he was the Free State representative on the Boundary Commission which is responsible for the mess this country is in today. The other members tricked him and he had to resign. And that finished his political life."

That night I asked my father, "What was the Boundary Commission?" He explained that it was a commission which met in 1924 to establish boundaries between Northern Ireland and the new Free State of Southern Ireland. I told him what had been said in school. My father was furious. He said Eoin MacNeill resigned because he felt unable to sign the majority report and because of that the commission, far from setting the boundaries, broke down. The next morning my father went to the school and demanded an apology. He got it.

My father had admired Eoin MacNeill ever since their schooldays at Saint Malachy's where they were members of a special "university" class which prepared clever boys for examinations at the old Royal University of Ireland. MacNeill married my father's sister and was known to me as "Uncle John". (My father himself married late in life and so Uncle John was more of an age to be my grand-uncle than my uncle.) When I was a child I often spent part of my summer holidays at his house in Dublin. I remember that he liked to break the long hours in his study by coming out to work in his garden and it was during these breaks that I discovered him to be infinitely more interesting than other grown-ups, for he treated children as his conversational equals, on an unbarred level in Ireland in those days. He also, in some ineluctable way, communicated an impression of complete integrity and truthfulness. Later, I was to discover that this honesty, coupled with an unwillingness to doubt the word of men he counted as his friends was, perhaps, the main reason for those last lonely years in his study and garden, an ironic ending to a life which changed the fate of the Irish nation.

In the popular mythology of the events leading to the foundation of the Irish state, and particularly in biographies written about other participants, it has been found convenient to assign to Eoin MacNeill the role of the professor-intellectual, theorizing in his study, and overlooking the stern inevitability of revolutionary events. It is as though in the cast of characters in this drama, starring roles have been given to those who accepted the old chimera that Ireland must see bloodshed in each generation, bloodshed essential to redeem her people. They were men for whom, as MacNeill noted in his own unpublished memoir, the nation "was not so much a thing which they should be satisfied to serve, but rather a stage upon which they might expect to play a part in the drama of heroism." MacNeill himself, a cold and realistic thinker, far from being remote from the real drift of historical events, was one of the few actors on this stage who perceived the vanity

and folly of useless bloodshed. Like Michael Collins he believed in action which would produce results, and it is revealing that Collins, a younger man who later became the most brilliant tactician of the Irish revolution, said to Hayden Talbot in 1922:

If Professor MacNeill's theory that these leaders had resolved upon founding a forlorn hope to awaken the Irish people is correct, no further explanation is necessary. It is therefore not at all difficult to accept Professor MacNeill's explanation of his order countermanding the rising. Far from Professor MacNeill's being in a minority in this matter it was we who were in the minority. With the German arms at the bottom of Tralee Bay, it must have seemed an act of madness.

Perhaps this inability to recognize MacNeill's real role in the events of Easter Week was, in part, due to the fact that he was the most unassuming of men and the physical opposite of the trench-coated revolutionary of popular fancy. The man I remember from my boyhood perfectly fitted his role as Professor of early and medieval Irish history at University College, Dublin. His customary attire was a sober, rather formal suit and an old-fashioned wing-collared shirt. He puffed continually on a large pipe and, indeed, as a child I believed that the Petersen Pipe advertisements ("The Thinking Man") were modeled on him. I remember the shock of surprise which came over me when, in his pulling-shed, I came across the first dangerous weapon I had ever handled, a British Army bayonet which he used as a digging tool. I took it into his garden and in the course of an excited half hour playing solitary soldier managed to wound myself in the knee, leaving a small, but permanent scar. Even then I did not connect that lethal military object with my uncle and his former activities. I now see my failure to make the connection as paradigmatic, for many, if not most, of his countrymen have failed to encompass the true facts of his extraordinary life.

Now, thirty-six years after his death, the first full-scale account of that life has been published. It was written by the late Michael Tierney, a former president of University College, Dublin, who was MacNeill's son-in-law. The author had access to all of MacNeill's papers, and, importantly, to an unpublished memoir dictated "rather half-heartedly" by MacNeill in the 1930s, after his family persuaded him that he should give his version of the controversial activities in which he was engaged for much of his life. In the memoir and in many of his published writings, died here, an authentic voice emerges, the voice of a historian who believed that the essence of a nation is its history, not its aspiration, or achievement, or statehood. If this cogent, meticulously researched biography inspires a re-evaluation of MacNeill's role, it will do him a service which he was curiously reluctant to perform for himself. In the memoir he consistently underplays his role in events and seems indisposed to the claims made by others that he inspired or instigated movements such as the Gaelic League and the Irish Volunteers.

This does not surprise me. I cannot personally remember him ever speaking of his former achievements as exploits. As Dr Tierney points out for MacNeill it was the deed itself that mattered; not the question of who should take the credit. But reading this book and discovering for the first time what sort of man Eoin MacNeill really was, one thinks of Emerson's remark that there is "properly no history, only biography".

MacNeill was born in Glenarm, Ulster, in 1867. His father was a Catholic, a ship's carpenter who became a "general merchant" and an intelligent family, MacNeill's brother, James, passed the difficult Indian Civil Service examination, becoming a commissioner in the Bombay Presidency and, later, the

Irish Free State's first high commissioner in London, and its second governor-general. Another brother, Hugh, a classical who taught Latin in the Jesuit University College, Dublin, entered literature, unknown to himself, as "Professor McHugh" in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. John (Eoin) took first place in Ireland in his senior matriculation and after obtaining a degree in the Royal University of Ireland secured an appointment in the accountant general's office in Dublin. He was not an Irish speaker (in fact, few people from his part of the country had any Irish). He belonged, as he put it, "to a generation when it had become customary, as it has at one time or another in most parts of the country, for parents to conceal their knowledge of Irish from their children". Typically, having decided to learn Irish, he found the perfect method. He began to make summer visits to, and live among, the Irish-speaking Aran islands and later was responsible for teaching many of the young Aran men to read and write their own language correctly.

In 1892, when elected president of the National Literary Society, MacNeill delivered an address on the de-Anglicization of Ireland. The real Irish, he pointed out, were not the upper class of the ascendancy, the Irish and soul of Ireland did not belong to these people, but to those whom Dean Swift had called the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. These were the Irish nation, to whom the Irish language belonged. They had advanced very far towards Anglicization: the problem was to reverse the process and this must be done through the language, the national music, and the national games, but, above all, by speaking the language. In 1893 he got in touch with Douglas Hyde who is popularly believed to be the founder of the Gaelic League, and as Hyde later wrote: "It was Eoin MacNeill who sent out the circular calling the meeting (at which the Gaelic League was founded)."

As Dr Tierney's book shows, MacNeill became the mainspring of this extraordinary movement, as editor, writer and speaker. He travelled all over the country on its behalf and because of the astonishing success of the League among the "real Irish" people he became, within a few years, one of the best-known men in the land. But he did not conceive of this potentially powerful national movement as political. "Politics" had to have remained for him a secondary and subversive matter as regards Irish nationality. In one of his more intriguing addresses he states that "Nationality is not a question of race. It stands on a higher plane. It belongs to rational and spiritual man, to the sphere of mind; and the chief thread of its continuity is the chief embodiment of mind, namely the spoken and written word." He saw the Gaelic League as a *Volksbewegung*, and wrote, "You might as well be putting wooden legs on him" as trying to restore Irish through the schools system.

While MacNeill did not view the League as a means to political independence, it was an idea of his which set in motion the forces which ultimately resulted in the founding of the Irish Free State. In "The North Began", an article he wrote in 1913, he seized upon the notion that because the British had allowed Sir Edward Carson to form the Ulster Volunteers to hold Northern Ireland "for the Empire", they had in effect abrogated the terms of the Union. MacNeill continued: "It appears that the British Army cannot now be used to prevent the enrolment, drilling and reviewing of Volunteers in Ireland. There is nothing to prevent the other 28 counties from calling into existence citizen forces to hold Ireland for the Empire." He realized that the powerful obstacles which had hitherto made impossible the formation of an Irish national army - the Treason Felony Act and the Royal Irish Constabulary - had been deprived of their power by Carson's action. MacNeill became a commissioner in the further saw that this would not only guarantee Home Rule but, make it

detailed provisions irrelevant. What would matter was not *for whom* Ireland was to be held, but *by whom*, and MacNeill perceived what was to be, inevitably, the answer.

Because of "The North Began", he was approached by Bulmer Hobson of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the old physical-force party and by The O'Rahilly. They asked him if he had meant what he said and, if so, would he head such a force of Irish Volunteers? Although his agreement would jeopardize his life's work for the Gaelic League, MacNeill foresaw, as Hobson did, that a force recruited by him, a widely respected moderate, would be much larger than any which could be formed by the IRB working on its own. As his wife, my Aunt Taddie, later told it, my uncle excused himself from those in his study and went across the hall to the dining room where she sat sewing. He told her of the proposal, saying that his action would inevitably involve himself and the children and "might mean the loss of all security, imprisonment, even death." He would not go on with it without her consent. She asked him did he think it "the right thing to do", and when he answered "Yes" she said, "Then do it". And so, he became the first president of the Irish Volunteers.

It was a decision which led him into a maze of Jeezil, to the agonizing decisions as Chief of Staff in Easter Week, to anguish at the recklessness and treachery of men he counted as his friends, to his and his sons' arrests, to a British court martial and a sentence of life imprisonment. It led to life as a felon in Dartmoor and his family after the loss of his university post to night-time arrests by Black and Tans, to further imprisonment and to the horrors of the Irish

civil war in which his twenty-two-year-old son, Brian, was killed in a burst of machine-gun fire. "The loss of all security, imprisonment, even death", which he had foreseen, in his usual cold and realistic way, became the fabric of his daily life.

He served as minister for finance, then for industry, in the first Dail. After his second imprisonment by the British, he was elected speaker of the second Dail. He offered himself as Free State member on the ill-fated Boundary Commission, although he had little hope of it from the beginning and characterized it as "the most disagreeable duty I have ever undertaken". When he retired to his study afterwards, it was 1800 his great work on the *Celtic Calendar* and help found the valuable Irish Manuscript Commission.

These were the years in which I knew him. When I returned to Ireland in October 1943, at the war's end, it was just in time to attend his funeral. I had come from North Africa, Italy and France. Here, in neutral Ireland, it seemed that De Valera and his political foes, kneeling in prayer at my uncle's funeral, were believing in a common past. I was not, like my Uncle John, a realist. Ireland has never lacked those who will die for her. What she lacks are men who can think clearly and calmly about the consequences of their actions. Eoin MacNeill was one of the few who could. As the late C.P. Curran wrote in an obituary: "To return an inverted crane to its base is effectively a revolution and that is what MacNeill did with this country and with the simple and unusual level of radical and clear thinking."

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## Splits and reactions

By Roy Foster

SEAN CRONIN:  
Irish Nationalism  
A History of its Roots and Ideology  
391pp. Dublin: The Academy Press.  
£13.60.  
0 906187 34 6

The Department of Education in newly-independent Ireland laid down guidelines on the teaching of modern Irish history in the following way: "The continuity of the separatist ideology from Tone to Pearse should be stressed. The events leading up to the Rising of 1916 and to the struggle that followed it will be so fresh in the minds of all teachers that there can be no difficulty in dealing with them vividly... We live with the results of that triumphalist vision, and it is a commitment adhered to in much of Sean Cronin's book. But to say that his study is often obscuring, confusingly written, and full of glaring omissions is not to do it full justice: these disadvantages are inseparable from a fundamental unsureness of aim, summed up in its inappropriate title and compounded by too many typographical errors (one assumes that, for instance, the description of Patrick Pearse as "a most tolerant person" is a misprint). For it is not a "history"; it is a selective study, stemming from work done for a doctorate in Political Science, and suffering from the cognate faults of recourse to pointless parallels and non-applicable "models", with passages of mosaic from Weber and Marx doing duty for exploration of evidence and facts. But the author's other life as an experienced and perceptive journalist comes to his rescue; and if the chapters of synthetic "history" are persevered with, the eventual analysis of recent and contemporary events provides much of value.

The direction Dr Cronin takes is often misleading and he frequently relies on false guides such as Monheim and Morgenstern. "For the purposes of this study ideology means the political ideas and outlook of Irish nationalism", we are told; and this presupposes a continuum of nationalism as "a class struggle of the peasantry, led by the Catholic middle class, against the landlords backed by English power". Not only does such an analysis beg virtually every question raised by recent scholarship about the Land War; it also raises the issue of how, and in whose interests, a "middle class" can lead a supposedly successful peasant "class war". (The other implication here is that what united the alliance was neither economics nor nationalism but religion, a question often evaded by Dr Cronin.) Similarly, his praise of Marx for forecasting in 1870 a "social revolution" over land in Ireland, linked with a rebellion against English domination, ignores the character of the social revolution that the Land War actually represented ten years later (a revolution of rising expectations among the better-off farmers). Nor is Marx's science as striking as Cronin claims, since from the 1860s many landlords' pamphlets had been imploring Gladstone for a land purchase policy to help them out; often, indeed, incorporating a sense of angry detachment, appeals to the spirit of 1782, and citations of Count Cavour, which would surely qualify them for consideration in any comprehensive study of Irish nationalism.

This is not, however, part of Cronin's historical brief. What concerns him is to use Marx and Engels as authorities where it suits him (Marx actually managed to believe that Fenianism had a "socialist tendency"); to mention in his introductory survey that the seventeenth-century supporters of James II used "nationality" in our modern meaning; and that O'Connell, struggling for "an Irish nation-state", to begin his main commentary sharply with Wolfe Tone, avoiding earlier manifestations of colonial nationalism, and to leave out vital early nineteenth-century attempts to forge

a cultural identity through literature and antiquarianism. He also dismisses in a few lines uncomfortable figures like Standish O'Grady (described as a "Fenian Unionist" in his lifetime) and Samuel Ferguson (a writer of Protestant Repeal as well as rediscoverer of the Irish past); and he ignores completely Isaac Butt and the significance of the transition from Butt to Parnell (seen at the time as the end of any chance of an all-Ireland solution), as well as the importance of Parnell's impact with the hierarchy in the 1880s. At the outset he ignores the weight of recent research establishing just how unrepresentative the United Irishmen were, as well as the implications of recent trail-blazing work which has tried to analyse Whiteboyism and other eighteenth-century peasant movements. The stress is on a retrospectively-imposed "ideology", in order to make a connection with the use of Wolfe Tone as an icon for non-sectarian nationalism, characterised in Irish politics in the 1960s. This may be politically laudable, but is historically obscuring.

Cronin is most at home in twentieth-century politics and what his book most valuably delineates is a study of dissident Republicanism after 1921. Here there is much to appreciate: the use of Griffith and others made of Thomas Davis, for instance, is handled with wit and insight, and though not everyone might agree that in 1921 "the IRA accomplished what the Parliamentary Party had failed to do", their case is well made. From his own political involvements, Cronin is well qualified to trace the unifying splits and refinements of the IRA and the scholastic metaphysics of the "Second Dáil" position. In this context there is a great deal of valuable and useful material in the appendices: much from the McGarvey papers, including an "ultimatum" from the IRA to Lord Halifax in 1939, and even more engrossing - minutes of the IRA Army Council in 1938 on the bombing campaign in England. This, like some interesting first-hand evidence from Bulmer Hobson and others, is in the author's own possession. Most of all, a full and fascinating account is given of the reactions and splits set up within the Republican movement by the swing to Marxism in the 1960s - a development which seems of undoubted importance in dictating reactions among the governing classes north and south, as well as in the polarization which produced the Provisionals.

At this point in his account, Cronin convincingly introduces an international dimension missing from his earlier analysis (Pearse's blend of *revancheur* Catholicism, mysticism, chauvinism, and a certain murky economic corporatism should surely be seen in some European context). But the "historical" background remains so sketchy as to vitiate much of what Cronin is trying to do. The twenty-one page source-list leaves out the work of Paul Bew and Sam Clark which has done so much to clarify the connections between nationalism and the Land War, as well as that of Theo Hoppen, which has confronted the great unanswered question of what happened to local and national politics between O'Connell and Parnell - a question ignored by Cronin, who takes refuge in the self-justifying rationalization that "Fenianism raised the national consciousness of the peasantry to the point where it became clear that they would be satisfied with nothing less than a social revolution that would give them the ownership of the land and a political revolution that would permit them to govern themselves." Cronin is too intelligent to endorse the full teleological line, and he also likes a paradox; but this means that some of his points (the degeneration of United Irishism into sectarianism, the inevitability of partition from the 1880s), pungently made though they are, sit oddly with the rest of his structure. Above all, the "roots" of Ulster "nationalism" are ignored, let alone the "roots" of the work of A. J. O. Stewart and David Miller is left out but not apparent; while F. S. L. Lyons's deceptively slight and elegant *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland*

1890-1939, which so resonantly indicates the multiple national cultures in twentieth-century Ireland, is significantly absent. It may be that Cronin feels, reasonably enough, that well-meaning historians have given the Ulster Protestants' aboriginal political tradition all the rope it deserves; he may disagree for ideological reasons with many of those who try to explore its framework (as, for instance, he crisply dismisses the British and Irish Communist Organization's "two nations" theory as a manifestation of "neo-Stalinism"). But the recent work of young Marxist historians like Henry Patterson on the bases of working-class Unionism in Belfast makes Cronin's treatment of this phenomenon seem woefully inadequate. Ulster Protestants, he tells us, had no part in the Land League (a myth now exploded); they appear in the twentieth-century section as "settlers of British descent"; "by 1913", we are told, "it was clear that the English Establishment would resist Home Rule by all means, including force" (my italics). Finally, "Protestant mobs" make their casual appearance; but their own implicit "nationalism" is untouched until the beginning of the last chapter. (This is another reason why the final section of the work carries more conviction and interest, as it deals with the efforts of figures like Cathal Goulding to co-opt the Protestant working class into Official IRA theory.)

To give this intractable strain more historiographical attention would divert that message laid down so unequivocally by the Department of Education - a message which, in spite of a good deal of valuable and acute comment, Cronin generally amplifies. His concluding chapter is full of sensible and intelligent comments, and follows several arguments which no sane and informed observer could dispute - notably the unproductiveness of Britain's "guarantee" to the Ulster Unionists, and the need for a cold breath of secularism, north and south. The main thrust of the book, however, bears out another message: the notion articulated in a particularly interesting testimonial drawn up for the author by a Republican imprisoned to the late 1950s, as was Cronin himself. Describing his initial commitment to the cause, in the mid-1950s, Sean O'Leary writes: "The viability of the nation, internationally and nationally, hinged on control by the Irish of a state building on traditional Irish values and traditions. Any body who contested this view would be denying the deepest aspirations of the Irish people and, in doing so, would have to be treated as a rebel. Needless to say, the Unionist majority in the Six Counties immediately fell into this category." Thirty years before, George Bernard Shaw, an Irishman not quoted by Dr Cronin, wrote what might be seen as a gloss on these remarks:

There are formidable vested interests in our huge national stock of junk and bilge, glowing with the phosphorescence of romance... Nationalism must now be added to the refuse pile of superstitions. We are now citizens of the world, and the man who divides the world into elect Irishmen and reprobate foreign devils (especially Englishmen) had better live on the Black-keels, where he can admire himself without much disturbance. Perhaps, after all, our late troubles were not so purposeless as they seemed. They were probably ordained to prove to us that we are no better than other people; and when Ireland is once forced to accept this stupendous new idea, goodbye to the old patriotism. We must realize that national independence is now impossible.

It would be gratifying to read a history of Irish nationalism which stressed its discontinuities, its amoebic qualities of transformation and regeneration, and which might take this passage for an epigraph. But for all Cronin's faith in EEC membership, broadening horizons, the onset of class politics, and the adoption of a secular spirit, what he really demonstrates is that such a work, like Emmet's epitaph, remains as yet unlikely to be written.

## Castle Catholic

By Denis Donoghue

PATRICK SHEA:  
Voices and the Sound of Drums  
An Irish Autobiography  
208pp. Belfast: Blackstaff Press.  
£6.95 (paperback, £3.50).  
0 85640 228

Patrick Shea's father, like my own, was born "on a small farm on a steep mountainside in County Kerry". At that time, about 1875, a lot of Gaelic was still spoken in Kerry, but it was not taught in the schools, so Shea grew up, like my father, fluent in Gaelic and English but literate only in English. Some members of the family emigrated to America, but Shea stayed in Ireland and, like my father, joined the Royal Irish Constabulary. He served till the RIC was disbanded, following the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. At that point he went to Newry, Co. Down, and made a new career for himself as Clerk of the Petty Sessions. My father took up the option of joining the new Royal Ulster Constabulary in his RIC rank as a sergeant; he served in various towns and spent most of his later life in charge of a small police station in Warrenpoint, Co. Down. Patrick Shea attended school at the old Abbey, the Christian Brothers School in Newry, my own school twenty years later.

Although the main tradition of the Christian Brothers Schools was Nationalist, and therefore suspicious of the new Stormont Government in Belfast, Shea competed for an appointment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service in 1926, and was successful. He stayed as a civil servant till he retired on pension in 1973. His career was remarkable in at least one respect: despite the fact that he was a Roman Catholic, he eventually became Permanent Secretary to the Public Building and Works Department. Only one RC predecessor, Bonaparte Wyse, had ever risen to the rank of Permanent Secretary of a Department in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. (It was made clear to my father, that, being a Roman Catholic, he should not expect to be promoted at any stage of his career: he ended as he had begun, a sergeant, on retirement in 1946.)

Mr Shea does not explain very clearly how he managed to get promotion. Admittedly, it took him nearly fifty years, and he was passed over on several occasions when, had he been a Protestant and a member of the Orange

Order, he would have secured preferment. But it is odd that, during those years, he was allowed to go so far. He was clearly a fine civil servant, intelligent and hard-working. An affable fellow, too. He was a Catholic, indeed, but there was no suggestion that he would prove difficult or disloyal. By his own account the Nationalism of the Christian Brothers boys was alien to him: in Dublin, people would have called him a Castle Catholic, meaning a Catholic who was ready to be invited, as a safe man, to official functions in Dublin Castle. In my own case, the CBS brand of Nationalism in Newry was fairly congenial. The main emphasis in the school was on Gaelic and football. Gaelic football of course. I was good at Gaelic and incompetent at football, but my problems were not ideological. It would never have occurred to me to try for a job in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Living in a police-barracks on money my father earned from Stormont was hard enough to stomach.

There are several obvious explanations for Shea's good fortune. By 1969, he had done his stint, forty-three years in which he had proved himself amenable to the seniors. Captain Terence O'Neill became Prime Minister in 1963, a decent man who thought the time was appropriate to improve the relations between Belfast and Dublin. In 1968 the protest marches began, with angry scenes between the Peoples' Democracy and the Unionists. The Northern Ireland government started putting a few token Papists into high office to suggest to the world that the bad old days of Lord Craigavon and Sir Basil Brooke were over. A Roman Catholic might now become a judge or even a permanent secretary of a department.

Mr Shea's account of his early years in the Service is extremely interesting. I am ready to believe that his masters were fine fellows: so were they all, all honourable men. It was easy for them to be fine, when every Papist knew his lowly place. Since 1968, fitness has become more difficult. Shea's last chapters are rather perfunctory. His account of "direct rule" and the closure of Stormont in 1972 is so illuminating that I wish there were more of it. In that year Shea wrote, but kept to himself, a document setting out what he regarded as the crucial issues affecting Northern Ireland at that time. He now adds only a postscript:

## Black Bread

(for Ann Pasternak-Slater)

Spiltlog brehas, spiky thicket, kinship - this is the passionate, the phonic surface I can take only on trust, like a character translated to a short story whose huge language he doesn't know. So we break black bread in the provinces and can't be certain what it is we're missing, or what sacrament this might be, the loaf wrapped in a shirt-tail like a prisoner's secret or a caked litan, that is sour and good, and has crissed over verets, kilometres, miles. It's those journeys tholed under the salt stars. In the eager wind that starves scotries and students in their loag coats. Claudius is on the phone, hard that hard accent scraping its honts on the threshold, his thick acid voice in your uncle's conscience, I'd have known better how to defend my friend. Bitter! Bitter! Bitter! the waddling-ghosts chant in bast sandals, the pickled cucumbers cry out in a prickly opera and round grates of coriander stud the desert crust. It's a lump of northern peat, itself alone, and kin to the black earth, to shaggy spatech; I'll taste it on my tongue next year in the holy, the chosen, city of gold and parchment.

Tom Paulin

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# The lights of the Liffey

By William Trevor

Dublin: The People's City  
The Photographs of Nevill Johnson  
1952-53  
Foreword by James Plunkett  
188pp. Dublin: Academy Press. £15.  
0 908187 37 0

I remember a picture called "Nurses" painted by Nevill Johnson in 1953, or perhaps a little earlier. For almost thirty years I have carried this image in my mind - seven nurses gossiping, the elegance of their black-stockinged legs, their starchy uniforms against a receding landscape. Nevill Johnson is an Englishman who was then working in Ireland, one of a group of painters associated with the Victor Waddington Gallery in Dublin and with the annual Exhibition of Living Art, which had been founded to put the staid Royal Hibernian Academy in its place. The wheel has since come full circle: it is the Academy's occasional flashes of creativity that today relegate Irish artistic "progressiveness" to the shadows. But no doubt, in Ireland and elsewhere, all that will sort itself out, as extremes begin again to feed off one another.

In the meantime photography is in vogue, and the coffee-tables of the well-to-do are laden with the riches of a thousand snapping shutters. The photographer - once upon a time a diffident man who kept disappearing beneath a black cloth - is now at the heart of the fashionable world. His pictures strive to find beauty in the

cult of the ugly - in the skinhead's snarl or the pathos of the punk, in the deformed and the maimed, the lunatic and the unkempt.

Ireland is generally accorded a gentler treatment, as if it has suffered enough already. Greyhound racing and cattle sales are so coyly observed that all reality is lost. Old farmers obligingly pose by a haystack or in a ditch, and you don't believe a word of it. There's an artificial wind in the hair of a girl from Ballinasally, and artificial grins in Castlebar and Skibbereen. There are artificial priests and nuns and horses and oysters, and reel and reel of dubious First Communions. Wicklow and Connemara are dressed up for the occasion in colours that have never seen the light of an Irish day. An American photographer, Daniel Kaufman, writing specifically about taking pictures in Ireland, explains how he prints blue into a landscape because "to me blue helps it look cold and lonely. I wanted the monochrome feeling to be in the print and blue also helped with that." And again: "I had the colour intensified strongly in the printing. I wanted a slightly unreal look because the experience of seeing this particular sunset was extraordinary."

But now, as if to set at least part of the record straight, there are the photographs of Nevill Johnson, collected under the rather misleading title *Dublin: The People's City*. There is nothing in any of them to match the artistry of his painting, and if he was aware of this it may have inspired their dour vitality. The interiors and

the tattered Georgian doorways, the geraniums and lace-curtains, sunlight on the rays of Bath Lane, the Halfpenny Bridge, Ellis Quay, a bus-stop in the rain: all have been observed with an artist's eye that is intent upon the unvarnished truth. Everything is in modest black and white, and at no time is the camera guilty of giving itself airs.

The best of these photographs have people in them - the tired woman outside her tenement in the Coombe, the man shouting in Wine-tavern Street, the auctioneer's bell-ringer in Bachelor's Walk, the hook-browed, the knitters. It is the Dublin of the 1930s, which Johnson found a stimulating time. "The air was bright, and our hearts pumped with the promise of a new world..." The barstool supported some, others it captured, and for some the snugs were tombs. "He came to the city with an Englishman's enthusiasm, and returning today he delights in it again. 'The Coombe still has its noise and its syntax, and still its Bond Street. And the lanes - like bells and blood and trumpets the names of the lanes - Engine, Golden, Funnally, silent now, their rafters like ribs. And on the north side, off Smithfield, Strump and Cuckoo Lane and Thundercut Alley.' It might seem fanciful to imagine that such enthusiasm is conveyed by the photographs, that an element has been captured of the photographer himself. I don't think it is. As a record of Dublin and Dubliners, this is a unique book, the most impressive of its kind since Kieran Keeley gathered the photographs of Robert French in *The Light of Other Days*.



"Two Shawlies", a watercolour on paper by William Connor, the Belfast painter, who was well known for his depiction of working-class life. This reproduction is taken from Connor 1881 - 1968: The Life and Work of an Ulster Artist by Judith C. Wilson, published July 30 (160pp. Blackstaff Press. £9.95.)

## Benign patronage

By Jennifer Johnston

M. K. LYLE  
Out of the Past: Ulster Voices Speak  
338pp. New York: Vintage Press.  
£4.75  
0 533 04292 5

The myth surrounding Ireland's past is very hard. We Irish, as a race, staunchly refuse to view our past in the context of the world, or even Europe. Here at the very edge of the Continent we have always been, and perhaps always will be, swept along in the tide of European political and social movement. We prefer to feel that we are a special case; our sufferings have been greater than those of any other country, our struggle for identity more heroic and against greater odds.

Over the past ten years or so a

large number of writers and historians have attempted to explain the Irish - indeed it must now be narrowed down, the Ulster people - to the world and to themselves; to re-identify the problems and the causes of problems, disentangle myth from history. As far as I am concerned two of these books have stood out as being of exceptional value and interest: *The Narrow Ground*, by A. T. Q. Stewart, the publication of which passed almost unnoticed, but which won the Ewart Biggs Peace Prize, and *The Siege of Derry*, by Patrick McCorry. An American lady of Ulster stock has now joined those writers who have attempted to cast light on some of the terrible controversies of Ireland. M. K. Lyle, in her book *Out of the Past: Ulster Voices Speak*, has gathered together a collection of family letters and diary entries covering the period from 1778 to 1905, attempting to give us "signposts" pointing to some fair assessment of what is truth and what is myth. What she succeeds in doing is really to give us a very fair picture of upper-middle-class life as it was led in the province of Ulster over that 120 years.

The problem with collecting and publishing family letters is that unless they were written by exceptionally witty and perceptive people, or by people with some unusual and controversial view of life, they tend not to hold one's interest for very long. It is hard to remain intrigued by the progress of X's toothache or the colour of Y's ball gown. The writers collected here are good. Families are large. They have large houses, prosperous estates, family connections throughout the province and also in England. The children have governesses and the boys go to public schools and then on into the Church, the army and the diplomatic service.

Their views are, as might be expected, reactionary and patronizing, whether with regard to Gladstone's attitudes towards Ireland, the various movements for change within the country itself, or further afield the opium wars and the troubled times in India. They resist what might be painful change. Their descendants

still do the same. Even the massive tragedy of the famine doesn't affect them radically in any way: the ladies form sewing co-operatives to relieve the poverty of families "on the property" and in the parish; the gentlemen form relief committees and open soup kitchens. One of the family, Thomas Scott, sensibly sent his wife and family to live in Paris for the worst of the famine years. There is a tinge of guilt in one of her letters home: "I would give all I possess if I thought I could get back to Willsboro this year, the poor Irish are in such distress, I would much rather that they got our money instead of the French for whom I have no affection." But generally the feeling is one of benign patronage.

One section of the book makes entertaining reading: the diary entries of Charles Stewart Scott, who had a more relaxed and easy-going view of life than most of his family and connections. He arrives in Paris in 1859 to take up a post as temporary extra hand and unpaid attaché to the Embassy in Paris, where there was unusual stress of work owing to the tension of relations between France and Austria. He suffers from a certain lethargy with regard to work and a chronic lack of money, which makes his life complicated as he had a great eye for a pretty face and an appetite for food, drink and gambling. He is also charmingly indiscreet in his entries on the subject of diplomatic negotiations and dispatches. But otherwise *Out of the Past* does not succeed in being of more than purely family interest.

James Fairley's *Irish Whales and Whaling* (218pp. Blackstaff Press. £8.95. 0 85640 232 X) contains a detailed account of all species of whale to be found in Irish waters from "the common porpoise or herring-hog to the mighty blue whale". It also chronicles the history of whaling off Ireland from Viking times to the present day. The author has also provided a record of sightings and short histories of the Arranmore and Blackrock Whaling Companies in the early twentieth century. The book is illustrated with photographs, drawings and maps.

## A Mullingar miscellany

By Charles Davidson

LEO DALY:  
Titles  
128pp. The Westmeath Examiner with Albertus Kennedy. IRE7.

Titles is a collection of ephemera by Leo Daly, a Mullingar, Co Westmeath author. He refers to each piece as a "Title" rather than an essay, though all save one are essays in form. Every one is accompanied by an introduction by the author and a foreword (and in one case an epilogue) by another hand. This alone would make it an unusual piece of book making; the effect is increased by the wayward use of footnotes, sometimes on a different page from that of the text they elucidate, and sometimes having a page to themselves. Odd, too, is the manner of the book's illustration: the pictures are numerous, but in some cases appear to have no connection with the text.

Does the matter live up to the manner? It too is curious, with a diversity that prompted the description "ephemera", although this does prove too strong a term. The first of the five "Titles" is a learned essay on the references, direct or oblique, to St Patrick in the works of James Joyce, where they are always frequent and, in *Finnegans Wake*, "diversified to an extraordinary degree". Joyce used to celebrate St Patrick's Day with a plum pudding and it is a pity that no slice of it has been preserved (with Wolfe Tone's bicentennial and Lady Gregory's harm-brack), but Mr Daly gives us a good sprinkling of patrician curriants. His national sail seems to have stood close enough to Joyce's elbow, doubtless with his eyes modestly averted from the manuscript.

The second piece, "The Jealous Wall" is an account of the married life of Robert Rochford, first Earl of Belvedere, an eighteenth-century domestic tyrant who kept his wife under house arrest for eighteen years on suspicion of her adultery with his brother Arthur. She escaped

once but was brought back and so one tried to rescue her until the second earl freed her upon the death of his father. Belvedere also quarrelled with his brother George, and built the "Jealous wall", a Gothic folly, to screen the view of Rochford, George's house, from his own, Belvedere (the latter survives, with notable gardens). This extraordinary man flourished during his lifetime - there is no moral to the tale - and subsequently was one of the inspirations for Sir Kili Stoppag in Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*. Belvedere was the son of one Prima Iron Rochford: clearly it was an iron that had entered his soul.

The third title consists of a series of extracts from Dr George Cheyne's *Treatise on Health* published by William Kidd of the *Westmeath Journal* in Mullingar in 1787. Mr Daly interpolates his own comments, to the form of facetious platitudes. He returns to the essay form in "The life and opinions of Adolphus Cooke", the story of an eccentric landlord of Co Westmeath who lived from 1792 to 1876. Cooke was much odder than Belvedere and many instances of this oddness are given, but the stranger the tale, the more pedestrian becomes Mr Daly's prose, of which the following are fair samples: "Although no punster himself, Cooke could enjoy a joke, but was very sensitive about some things"; "It is interesting to speculate upon the origin of the story"; "however, the sting was in the tail". This lack of feeling for good writing continues into the next title, concerning the novelist Bulwer Lytton and his Irish wife Rosina, described as "beautiful, temperamental, talented, and endowed with a saucy Irish charm, she was a mature yet tender blossom ready for plucking by the literary rampaging wolves of the time". It is not easy to imagine a wolf plucking a temperamental blossom, although perhaps an Irish bull might do so. This title is made up of extracts from the Lyttons' correspondence (source unacknowledged) and has the appearance of a make-weight.

A slight enough volume, in all conscience, but it is cheap, well produced, and endowed with a saucy Irish charm.

## Vagrant stories

By Patricia Craig

FRANK O'CONNOR:  
The Cornet-Player Who Betrayed Ireland  
238pp. Dublin: Poolbeg Press. £7.50.  
0 905169 37 9

Of the 200-odd stories which Frank O'Connor wrote, forty or so remained uncollected, for various reasons (he intended to make a further draft, perhaps, or the story broke the pattern established in the volume to which it would have been assigned). Now, fifteen years after O'Connor's death, twenty-one of these "vagrant" pieces have been brought together to form a new collection.

The earliest story in *The Cornet Player* who betrayed Ireland goes back to 1926; the latest - "The Grip of the Geography" - is the one O'Connor was working on when he died. What's immediately striking about all of them is a kind of narrative vigour and flamboyance; no more than two or three are downcast and restrained, and even these have wrought-up moments. "There is a Lone House", for instance (one of O'Connor's best), about a mute woman with a dark episode in her past, and a roving drunkard, gains dramatic interest from the sudden explosions of feeling which disrupt its somnolence. "The Miracle", which begins gloomily enough with news on a wet morning looking out "on the lenten greyness of their fields", deals with an extravagant piece of hoodwinking and ends on a moderately wry note - "you couldn't expect to get used to miracles after you reached the age of seventy". The title story's exuberance is tempered with ruefulness: it presents a child's view of faction-fighting and the sorry predicament of a cornet-player tormented by opposing loyalties - to the band, and to his political leader.

It is a characteristic device of O'Connor's to avoid emotional intensity by keeping his characters at a proper distance; he is the anecdotalist, not the analyst, of strong feelings. He catches the overflow of passions in fluent lamentations and imprecations which are part of the rumbustious Irishness he set out to depict. It is all a performance, put on with a saving element of drollery. The canny, the bombastic and the disputatious: these are all here, each displaying his central trait to the full. If O'Connor sometimes pushes his characters to the brink of sentimentality, he rarely lets them topple over; a brisk retraction, or a cynical aside, is inserted at the last moment. Playfulness, verve and cunning are the narrator's attributes.

The benign mockery and unemitting criticism of Irish life, which charmed O'Connor's earliest readers, have come under attack in recent years from those who require from their fiction a sharper exposure of national ills, an oblique angle of vision or an undercurrent of ferocious discontent. It is true that O'Connor's habit is to poke fun at church dignitaries, for example, without repudiating too strongly the ethics of Catholicism. He is not in the grip of a lacerating satirical impulse, as Flann O'Brien was; both his comedy and his social commentaries are less dense and subtle than Sean O'Faolain's. But it should be remembered that he broke with tradition - the tradition of romantic republicanism, at any rate - by re-creating with great clarity and compassion his own experiences in the Irish civil war (his first collection, *Guests of the Nation*, which dealt with this theme, came out in 1931).

A couple of war stories (the gauche and the timorous caught up in nightmarish soldiering) have been found for the new collection; and also several concerning fierce, vehement, ragamuffin children. O'Connor, as always, adds a comic savor to the commonplace; in "The Climber", a little girl who is first captivated, then repelled, by respectability, you are invited to relish the child's devastating candour and innocent posturing.

cent posturing:

... More than ever she wanted to be respectable. She refused to go out with the other children; she stole Jackie's new cap from the drawer where Mrs Geney kept it, wrapped in its original tissue, and led him out by the hand.

"Now, will you keep on musing your cap," she said. "I don't know what sort of way you were dragged up at all, but you should always raise your cap to a lady.... Here's Mrs Dunphy along now. Raise your cap to her, you little enticer."

We know that this episode will end with a glorious return to oneness. It's significant that there are no significant females in these stories over the age of ten or twelve. "The lumps of girls" there are, and retiring wives, but none whose experiences are crucial to the theme. The natural condition of O'Connor's men is bachelorhood, though many are married; they surround themselves with garrulous comics and palaverers whose trick is to strike attitudes in a public bar. Courtship is evaded as a farcical campaign. We recognize again the justice of Elizabeth Bowen's remark about the sexlessness of standard Irish fiction (odd to find it borne out in the work of Frank O'Connor, author of many felicitous translations of mildly erotic Gaelic verse).

The weakest of the rediscovered stories - "A Case of Conscience", "Hughie", "The Adventurers" - are those which suffer from insufficient witiness, making the storyteller seem less than wholehearted about his undertaking. The oddest piece is "May Night", with its fearsome hints of J. M. Synge. O'Connor keeps his feet on the ground: no airy romancing or visions that came-by-the-left-hand here (the "Ghosts" in the story of that title are products of nostalgia, not psychic forces). But his characters' outrageous generalizations are always entertaining - on the subject of hypocrisy, for example: "The English had their walled cities, their castles, their artillery, as the price of their hypocrisy; all the unfortunate gulls of Irishmen ever got out of their self-deception was a ragged cloak and a bed in a wood." Honesty of expression, rather than realism, is O'Connor's objective, and this he achieves in an impressive number of stories. And always, his craftsmanship is unflattering and his showmanship assured.

## Criminal proceedings

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0 09 145140 X

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0 7091 9005 0

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T. J. Binyon

# BASIL BLACKWELL

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## commentary

## Harpoonist turns whale

By Mordaunt Vyner

Runyon on Broadway  
King's Head Theatre Club

Runyon on Broadway might be better described as Robert Cushman reading selected Runyon from a battered orange folder and singing six songs loosely associated with the writer's life in a frail but earnest quaver to the lunchtime crowd on Upper Street. The theatre critic of the *Observer*, Cushman has adored Runyon all his life and this show is his rather anxiously shared love with the world. Canning out, in fact, his definitely isn't a natural, which leads a certain pathos to the occasion. This is Hamlet playing the clown and I find in lower my eyes more than once when his worried, steel-rimmed gaze meets mine and I find me not laughing. There is something about Cushman's scholarly presence - he is a gaunt, bearded figure - which brings, despite its owner's intention, an overcritical light to bear on his audience. To be Runyon is clearly his desire, but he is like a Sunday burglar with a sack labelled "swag". His skimpily white 1960s suit, flared trousers, black shirt and turtleneck cream tie are a travesty of Nathan Detroit, and somehow I can't associate bushy beards with Broadway.

Runyon was born in Manhattan, Kansas, in 1880 and died in the other Manhattan in 1946, having made it his own. He was the son of a journeyman printer-editor and had his first by-line at seventeen. He hit New York in 1910. Within a few years he was world-famous as an ace sports correspondent, then as a fiction writer. His later style of raucous present-tense story-telling is what he is most remembered for. It is based on a certain trick of stating the obvious freshly, and a humorous manner of circumlocution.

At the end of his life, Runyon's name on a magazine-front was enough to swell its circulation by 50,000. He amassed a million, but he was always a gambler, a dandy and a night hawk. He bought new clothes every day and had 200 hand-made suits. He is said to have bought over 2,000 birds over the years, paying for them but neglecting to collect them. "My time of day is the night-time" wrote the superb Frank Loesser for *Guys and Dolls*, "when the street belongs to the cop and the janitor with a mop and the street lamp fills the gutter with gold".

Runyon gave up booze early on in favour of his henri and his first wife, but he chain-smoked fatally and consumed forty cups of coffee a day. In the last years of his life he suffered from a "slight case of mutilation": surgeons had removed his larynx in one of many painful operations to stem cancer, reducing his most gregarious of men to scribbling his arguments on pads, to be passed round the company at Linda's and elsewhere. He described himself as a "born rebel, but lacking in moral courage". He had enough. Suffering from the barium needle treatment he was having, he wrote, in a moment of weakness, "Why me? why me?", adding the next morning, "Why not?" In the final years he worked harder than ever. Paid \$100,000 by Alexander Korda to write a film for Bing Crosby, he produced the cheque at the Stork Club and threw it on the floor in front of his friend Walter Winchell. "Why did you do that?" asked Winchell. "To see if it would bounce" wrote Runyon. When his black capitals became rather larger than usual, the producer Mike Todd wrote "Don't shout, Damon".

All this, issuing from the orange folder of Mr Cushman, is never less than touching, though it must be said that most of it comes straight out of Don Taddon's model "Memoir of the author" in his 1947 selection of Runyon's work, *Short Takes*. There is a certain Broadway critic in this book who delights his readers by "heaving the old harpoon into actors unless they act to suit him". It goes against the grain to knock this unpretentious enthusiasm, but I left the King's Head this afternoon thinking that Damon Runyon wasn't quite such a funny man as I had thought he was when I went in, which wasn't really the object of the exercise.



"Angel" (1977), from the exhibition The Prints of Cecil Collins: A Retrospective, opening at the Tate Gallery on August 5.

## A Ruskin conference

By John Batchelor

The Ruskin Gallery at Bembridge contains probably the most important collection of items relating to Ruskin in the world. This year James Desuden, Curator of the gallery, organized a conference of some forty Ruskinians from July 17 to 19, and in the opening paper he gave a valuable account of the acquisitions by J. H. Whitehouse in the 1930s which enabled the collection to be formed. Whitehouse's purchases are now divided between Ruskin's House, Brantwood, at Conistone in the Lake District (which Whitehouse also purchased) and the Ruskin Gallery at Bembridge.

A striking and refreshing feature of this conference was its diversity; the fact that its members were not all competing for the same ground. Among the papers were contributions from a zoologist, a lawyer - Elfr Abramson, of the University of Chicago, who argued that Ruskin's writings might furnish us with a basis for a rule of law more flexible, and therefore better suited to twentieth-century problems - then the one we have inherited and from an art historian, John Unrau, of the University of Western Ontario, whose work on Ruskin's annotations of St Mark's basilica in Venice indicated that Ruskin was capable of exact scholarship of a very high standard. John Unrau suggested that this aspect of his talent was more or less deliberately suppressed by his father, John James Ruskin, who insisted that the scholarship in *Stones of Venice* should be curtailed in favour

of moral ideas which he, John James, may well have supplied himself.

The diversity of the conference's membership reflects the scale, scope and ambition of Ruskin's writings. From a distance Ruskin's books look monumental; huge, self-contained blocks of masonry on the Victorian landscape. As one approaches them they are seen to be fluid and unstable, highly charged and intensely personal books which transcend the categories of criticism, autobiography, economics and politics but at the same time demand one's attention if Victorian thinking on any of these topics is to be properly understood.

"Ruskinians" is perhaps the only classification available for the members of such a gathering. Robert Hewison gave a clear and elegant account of a central paradox in Ruskin - he renounced disciples, and yet discipleship is, in a sense, a necessary condition for studying him. In the closing paper Nicholas Shrimpton presented a concrete and, as it seemed to me, conclusive discovery - namely, that Hopkins' "The Sea and the Skylark" is directly based on the chapter called "The Two Boyhoods" in *Modern Painters*. Volume V. It is a scandalous fact that apart from *Præterita* and "The Two Boyhoods", so few pieces of Ruskin are available in a modern edition - the chapter is included in J. D. Rosenberg's selection - and the conference emphasized the need for a new edition which would provide a text of at least the major works for the rising number of scholars and students who are interested in this extraordinary, but central, Victorian figure.

## Among this week's contributors

NOEL ANNAN was Provost of King's College, Cambridge from 1956 to 1966. His books include *Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time*.

MICHAEL BANTON is the author of *Racial Minorities, 1972*, and *Police-Community Relations, 1973*.

JOHN BAYLEY's most recent book, *Shakespeare and Tragedy*, was published earlier this year.

HAROLD BEAVER is Reader in American Literature at the University of Warwick.

PETER CONRAO's books include *Romantic Opera and Literary Form, 1977*, and *Imagining America, 1980*.

PATRICIA CRAIG's critical study, *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction*, a collaboration with Mary Cadogan, was published earlier this year.

CHARLES DAVISON is a propagandist, specializing in early twentieth-century Ireland. He reviews regularly for the *Irish Times* and *Books Ireland*.

DENIS DONOHUE is Henry James Professor of Letters at New York University.

DOUGLAS DUNN's new collection of poems *St Kilda's Parliament*, will be published in the autumn.

ERIK DE MAUNY was BBC Radio Correspondent in Moscow from 1972 to 1974.

D. J. ENRIGHT's recent collections of poems include *A Faust Book, 1978*. He is editor of *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse 1945-80, 1980*.

ROY FOSTER is the author of *Civitas* and *Stewart Parnell: The Man and his*

Family, 1976. His *Lord Randall's Churchill: A Political Life* will be published later this year.

ERNEST OELLNER is Professor of Philosophy at the London School of Economics. His most recent book is *Mindful Society, 1981*.

VICTORIA GLENNING's *Edith Sitwell: A Unicorn Among Lions* is reviewed on page 863.

NORMAN HAMMOND is Archaeological Correspondent of *The Times*.

TONY HARRISON's poem on page 879 is one of a number of new sonnets from "The School of Eloquence"; the original sequence was published last year.

MARTIN HENIO's *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites* was published in 1978.

HAROLD JAMES is a Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON is Professor of French History at University College London. His books include *A Concise History of France, 1970*.

PAUL JOHNSON's recent books include *A History of Christianity, 1976*, and *Enemies of Society, 1977*.

JENNIFER JOHNSTON's new novel, *The Christmas Tree*, will be published shortly.

EAC KORN is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

EONA LONOLEY is a lecturer in English at The Queen's University, Belfast. She is editor of *A Longue not to be Betrayed: Selected prose of Edward Thomas, 1981*.

JOHN LUCAS is the editor of *The 1930s: A Challenge to Orthodoxy, 1979*. His *Literature of Change* was republished earlier this year.

DEREK MAHON's new collection of poems, *A Courtyard in Delft* is reviewed on page 888.

JOHN MOLLY's new collection of poems, *Feeling the Lake*, will be published later this year.

BRIAN MORRIS's novels include *Judith Henne, 1955*, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey, 1960*, and *Chitlolic, 1972*. His new novel, *The Temptation of Ellen Hughes*, will be published in the autumn.

LEON O'BRIEN's most recent book is *Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1858-1924, 1976*.

FRANK OMSBY is the editor of *Poets from the North of Ireland, 1979*.

TOM PAULIN's most recent collection of poems, *The Strange Museum*, was published last year.

MICHAEL SCAMMELL is writing a biography of Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

NICHOLAS SHRIMPTON is preparing an edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Junction Books "Plays in Performance" series.

WILLIAM TREVOR's most recent novel, *Other People's Worlds*, was published last year.

ROBIN ROBERTS has edited the forthcoming Oxford English Text of Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*.

ALAN RYAN is a lecturer in Politics at New College, Oxford.

J. R. VINCENT is Professor of Modern History at the University of Bristol.

BERNARD WASSERSTEIN is the author of *Britain and the Jews in Europe, 1939-1945, 1978*.

HUGO WILLIAMS's most recent collection of poems is *Love Life, 1980*.

## to the editor

## 'Conservatives and Conservatism'

Sir, - J. R. Vincent's review of *Conservatives and Conservatism* (July 10) may or may not be considered fair by the authors of that book, but as a comment on Conservatism it is at best eccentric. The main point of the review appears to be that attempts by Conservative thinkers to elaborate an organized theory are doomed to failure because "real" Conservative beliefs, "if they exist" (sic), are almost impossible to explain. If no one has yet articulated "real" Conservatism, why did not Professor Vincent describe it to us, since he seems so sure that existing writings on the subject are inadequate? It is difficult to see what purpose is served by such unnecessary obscurantism about a set of political beliefs with a perfectly respectable intellectual pedigree, unless it be that the easiest (most facile?) way of attacking something is patronizingly to deny that it exists at all.

The misuse of powdered milk in the Third World is doubtless a most worthy subject, but its use as a comparative yardstick for recent Conservative publications is mildly insulting to such authors as Gilmour, Utley, Scruton, Cowling, Powell, Letwin, to name but a few, who may reasonably be expected to hope that their work will not be dismissed as so much powdered philosophy.

There may be a touch of truth in the reviewer's comment that Conservative theory, as found in books, is unreal. This is perhaps a characteristic that it shares with political theories in general. I would venture to suggest, however, that the description would be more credibly applied to many other theories, both Left and Right, before that of Conservatism. It is precisely the strength of many Conservative theories that they do not make extravagant claims on their own behalf, and remain firmly rooted in experience rather than in Utopia.

Michael Oakeshott, whom Professor Vincent singles out for particularly dismissive treatment, is hardly easily wronged. It is wilfully misleading to imply that the paths of Oakeshott's intimations could lead only into "sociological contexts". Traditions of political and cultural behaviour do not have to be described in sociological terms, nor in this country do they consist overwhelmingly of "secular progressivism". Where is the latter in British conservatism, in the Orange Lodges, in preservationism or in the reluctance of British working men to be made efficient? It is undeniable that sometimes traditions are unclear, or violated, or that they are understood differently by particular individuals. This is made clear, if it would not otherwise be so, by Professor Vincent's view of some of our traditions. It does not then follow that traditions are not useful, even vital, in formulating political principles.

Neo-liberals are a little less unreasonably treated in this review. Their worst sin, it seems, is to "fall down on sociology": a sin that must surely be venial rather than mortal. They are given credit for being right about markets, but are accused of failing to acknowledge that "making money is a deviant activity". It is undeniable that an academic might regard making money as deviant, but there must currently be a dreadful outbreak of deviancy if every participant in the thriving "Black economy", every small businessman or street trader is to be classed as deviant. My main objection, though, to this discussion of market economics and entrepreneurship is the reviewer's refusal to admit that these notions are not the sole property of "neo-liberals", and can quite consistently find a place within Conservative theory without themselves becoming dominant. Edmund Burke, whose anti-Jacobinism Professor Vincent interprets as an attack on capitalism, would probably have agreed with this. Indeed, Burke's view of the economic sphere arguably has more in common with that of Humo

than with that of Cobbe or Coleridge.

As an explanation of Conservatism this review article is inadequate, and it does a disservice to political philosophy as well as to Conservatism in suggesting that it can be reduced to a "folk ideology". Intellectual Conservatism is alive and well, even if Professor Vincent has not noticed.

JONATHAN BRADLEY,  
14 Hughenden Road, Clifton,  
Bristol BS8 2TT.

## 'The Kornilov Affair'

Sir, - In his letter (July 10) Cyril Fitz-lyon deals admirably with most of the irrelevances which constitute Patrick Flaherty's attack on him (Letters, July 3). If I take up Mr Flaherty's challenge and reply to his letter, it is mainly because I find his procedure of attacking my reviewer rather than myself a particularly objectionable one. To take reviewers to task for sharing the opinions of the authors they review is to attempt to discourage them from writing about books they largely approve of, and smacks of literary intimidation.

As regards the assessment of Kornilov's character, I tried in my book to play down my own estimate of the man. He was certainly not, as Mr Flaherty seems to suppose, a typical reactionary Russian army general. Very few career officers of his day rose to such high rank as he did from a similar background, in his case that of a poor Cossack border settler's family in Central Asia. He had an exceptional capacity for individual initiative, and outstanding courage (how many senior Russian officers taken prisoner in World War I managed to escape?). Only a lukewarm, monomaniacal, Kornilov, who cannot the February Revolution with enthusiasm, though we have no record of his political stance prior to it, nor evidence that he would have preferred a régime of the type later characterized as "fascist" to straight-forward democracy; and I do not remember ever seeing any reliable report to indicate that he held antisemitic views. The primary and basic motive of his behaviour in August 1917 was not to establish any definite political order in the country, nor yet to help one class to maintain and strengthen its grip on affairs of state. What prompted him was rather the simple desire to carry out reforms in the disintegrating army which would make it possible to carry on the war and avoid a humiliating peace such as that finally imposed on Lenin in 1918 at Brest-Litovsk. In striving towards this end, Kornilov was bound to come into contact with political forces, including the Provisional Government, on whose support he had relied when he came to the country, and he was ready to defend. Other major political questions should, he believed - as did many moderates - be held in abeyance until the war had been brought to a successful conclusion. His own views, therefore, as occasionally revealed in the short time before his death, were neither being definite or representing deep or settled political convictions. Such reticence merits our respect rather than our derision. As a soldier, Kornilov knew where his duty lay, and he could have played a positive role in the Russian Revolution had not malevolent suspicion and double-crossing prevented it.

NEO-LIBERALISM is a little less unreasonably treated in this review. Their worst sin, it seems, is to "fall down on sociology": a sin that must surely be venial rather than mortal. They are given credit for being right about markets, but are accused of failing to acknowledge that "making money is a deviant activity". It is undeniable that an academic might regard making money as deviant, but there must currently be a dreadful outbreak of deviancy if every participant in the thriving "Black economy", every small businessman or street trader is to be classed as deviant. My main objection, though, to this discussion of market economics and entrepreneurship is the reviewer's refusal to admit that these notions are not the sole property of "neo-liberals", and can quite consistently find a place within Conservative theory without themselves becoming dominant. Edmund Burke, whose anti-Jacobinism Professor Vincent interprets as an attack on capitalism, would probably have agreed with this. Indeed, Burke's view of the economic sphere arguably has more in common with that of Humo

As from: St Antony's College, Woodstock Rd, Oxford.

The British publishers of Jean Orleu's *Voltaire*, reviewed on page 485 of the *TLS* for March 13, are Columbia Books; only the book's American publishers, Doubleday, were noted in the review.

The correct title and details of the book mentioned in a note on page 294 of the *TLS* for March 13 are: *Sidney Morris Cockerell and Joan Rix Tebbutt, Thirty Recent Bindings*, with an introduction by Sir Harry Barnes. K. D. Duval, French, Foss (1980).

As from: St Antony's College, Woodstock Rd, Oxford.

## Eichenbaum and Structuralism

Sir, - While looking up footnotes to a translation of the Russian formalists' writings on cinema which I am currently editing, I had to consult the bibliography of Boris Eichenbaum, and to my surprise - dismay, really - I learned that he had indeed published a piece, "Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' (A New Theory)" in the *Criterion*, 15 (1931), 50-57. In other words, in my first letter (June 26) I drew a wrong inference from the Read-Calverton correspondence. Yet the "discovery" of Eichenbaum's article has only increased my perplexity regarding the circumstances of this strange point of contact between Anglo-American and Russian "formalism" - and for two different reasons. First, because Eichenbaum's study is neither an example of formalist nor yet of sociological (let alone Marxist) criticism, but rather a straightforward exercise in the history of ideas; and secondly, because it seems highly unlikely that in 1930, at the very time when formalism was officially censured in the Soviet Union, Eichenbaum would have dared to submit any study, no matter how innocuous, for publication in the West. As it happens, the *Criterion* essay is Eichenbaum's single foreign publication in the 1920s and 1930s; and he was not again published in English until the early '70s. In point of fact, "Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'" is not a separate article at all; it is merely a brief excerpt from the first volume of Eichenbaum's monumental literary biography of Leo Tolstoy, which appeared in the Russian original in 1928. The subsequent volumes, each dedicated to a decade of Tolstoy's career, came out in 1931 and, with an unfortunate delay, in 1960. Even more sadly, the manuscript of the fourth volume was lost - drowned - during Eichenbaum's evacuation from the besieged Leningrad in 1942. In the *Criterion* excerpt, Eichenbaum convincingly argued that one of the key philosophical and political sources of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869) had been Proudhon's treatise *La Guerre et la Paix: Recherches sur le principe de la constitution du droit des gens* (1861; 1864 in Russian translation). It may interest your readers that Eichenbaum's extraordinary work of literary scholarship, comparable in scope to Leon Edel's biography of Henry James and in methodology to

Joseph Frank's multi-volume study of Dostoevsky, is about to appear in English: *Tolstoy in the Strides and Tostia in the Seventies* (Aulis, 2901 Featherway, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104).

One day we may even find out what prompted Eichenbaum's publication in the *Criterion* - and what prompted T. S. Eliot's misgivings about the Russian critic.

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## Fairy-tales for the Gilded Age

By Harold Beaver

HORATIO ALGER:

A *Fancy of Hers* and *The Disagreeable Woman*. Introduction by Ralph D. Gardner. 179pp. New York: Vnn Nostrand Reinhold, £11.20. 0 442 24716 8

The name Horatio Alger has become a byword for phenomenal success, for a rise from rags to riches conceivable only in America. For three decades, from the 1860s to the 1890s, some 110 books by Alger, with such alliterative titles as *Brave and Bold*, *Sink or Swim*, *Strive and Succeed*, *Strong and Steady*, *Try and Trust*, *Fame and Fortune*, tumbled from the press at the rate of three or four a year. Their alliterative heroes (Frank Fowler, Ben Barclay, Tom Temple, Mark Mason, Paul Prescott, Rulph Raymond) ruled the minds and imaginations of all who grew up in the United States between the Civil War and the Depression.

Never had there been such a surefire bestseller as Horatio Alger. His estimated sales range from twenty to four hundred million, beating Mark Twain and Louisa May Alcott and Booth Tarkington—even Dickens—in hollow. He was neither so didactic as school primers, nor as lurid as dime novels, nor as terrifying as Grimm, nor as exhortative as Peter Parley, nor as woebegone as Andersen. His were spunky tales in which the town bully was whipped and newboys became bankers, farmboys senators, rail-splitters President of the United States. The bootblacks and messenger boys were mostly fifteen years old and usually orphaned. If country boys, they had lost their family farm to some unscrupulous villain. All had enemies: swaggers or big game hunters, swindlers, or convicted stepfathers, who staged or kidnapped or framed them. But they met, disaster head-on—literally, in the shape of oncoming vehicles, runaway horses, or speeding trains—surviving against all odds. So by luck and pluck they rose to be clerks and investors their rewards in real estate or Erie Railroad shares. By the time they were eighteen they were well on the way to wealth and bourgeois respectability.

But these honest, enterprising lads were not altogether pious. There was a foretaste of Emil and the detectives about them as they crisscrossed from Lower Broadway to the East River clearing up the mystery of their identity or recovering their lawful legacy. They puffed penny cigars, tossed down whisky at three cents a shot, and attended Bowery theatres. But they also studied at night and were resolved to better themselves. The implicit motto was: "If Ragged Dick can do it, so can you!" Country lads, still in the vast majority, could imaginatively roam the toiling streets of Manhattan; city lads could set out on hazardous exploits to the Great Plains or Rocky Mountains. All showed the immigrant masses that the native virtues were initiative and shrewdness; that America, above all, was the land of opportunity and prosperity.

No wonder there has been an Alger revival in recent years. The price of some first editions has rocketed into the thousands. But Alger's name has also been hedged round by salacious gossip. This idealist in two winks of Benjamin Franklin has been called "a slave to pedantic desires that even the most promiscuous followers of the American ideal still condemn as morally unacceptable". Ralph D. Gardner, who first researched the evidence for his biography, *Horatio Alger; or, The American Hero Era* (1964), here charts the homosexual issue—or issue—for what it's worth.

In 1864, after graduating from Harvard and the Cambridge Divinity School, Alger was ordained as minister of the First Parish Unitarian Church of Brewster, on Cape Cod. Sixteen months later, accused of "unnatural familiarity with boys", he was dismissed from his pulpit. The church wrote to the American Unitarian Association in Boston that

on the examination of two boys (and they have good reason to think there are others) they were entirely con-

firmed and unanimous in the opinion of his being guilty to the full extent of the above specified charges.

Whereupon the committee sent for Alger and to him specified the charges and evidence of his guilt, which he neither denied or attempted to extenuate but received it with the apparent calmness of an old offender—and hastily left town in the very next train, for parts unknown—probably Boston.

But what Horatio Alger actually did remains unclear. Maybe he was just another Wing Biddlebaum, the schoolmaster in Sherwood Anderson's story *Hans*, who was hounded from a Pennsylvania town. The committee was all in a froth with charges of an abominable, heinous crime "which is too revolting to think of in the most brutal of our race—the commission of which under any circumstances, is to a refined or christian mind too utterly incomprehensible". The thirty-four-year-old Alger at least retired with dignity. But the charge, in retrospect, has stuck. He never married and lived for years in the Newsboys' Lodging House on Fulton Street where he found much of the material for his stories. John Selye summed up the whole matter eight years ago in the *New York Times Book Review*:

If Alger had indeed been an active homosexual, he would have been as a fox among chickens. But the very fact of his presence in the [Newsboys' Lodging House] for so many years suggests that, whatever his inclinations, he restrained them. Instead, proximity bred perceptiveness—Alger knew what boys wanted from a book better than most children's writers, then and now.

In fact, Alger had written for adults before turning to teenage fiction. As many as nine dime novels were serialized while he was still at Divinity School. But after the runaway success of *Ragged Dick* in 1868 he was discouraged by his publisher from continuing his readership and was forced to issue adult novels surreptitiously. *A Fancy of Hers* was published anonymously in 1877 and never promoted lest it hurt Alger's juvenile market. But he was fond of the book and kept tinkering with it until it was reprinted in *Myrtle's Magazine* seven years before his death in 1892. The attraction must have been due, in part, to the autobiographical touches from his own child-

hood in the impoverished manse of the Rev. Horatio Alger Sr. *The Disagreeable Woman* was first published in 1895 under the pseudonym Julian Starr. They make a finely contrasted pair of New Hampshire and Manhattan life, still as readable today as a century ago.

Both are mysteries of a kind in which a wealthy lady, incognito, inhabits the humdrum world of a New England village or New York boarding-house in order to test the generosity and decency of a home-spun American community. It is a device familiar from Haroun-al-Raschid's Baghdad to *Mensure for Measure*, cast here in female guise. Alger's customary formula is flipped upside down. It is the benefactress now, not the ragged youth, who concerns us; it is her moral scrutiny, piercing through pomposity and sham, that confronts us with the knowledge of ever-present, divine aid. Trite as it may seem, these fictions are saved by Alger's absolute faith in their fairy-tale convention; they are enhanced by his ironic delight in the hypocritically shabby societies which his slumming divinities (descending like Zeus in a shower of gold) expose.

The Lady Bountiful in *A Fancy of Hers* is a wealthy orphan who, instead of visiting Newport or Bar Harbor, like a proper Jamesian heroine, opts for schoolteaching in remote New England. The world of Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* or Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware* is opened up to the discerning gaze of a social butterfly who can dance rings round the rural oafs with their sewing circles and country parties and school committees and ecclesiastical (part Methodist, part Congregational) Sunday School outings. Soon she is adored by all the children and finds true love. Her "experiment" brings its own reward.

So, in Alger's other novel reprinted here, does that of the blunt, brusque "disagreeable woman" of a Manhattan boarding-house who cuts through all humbug and pretension. But seems less and less disagreeable as she moves away from her wealth for true heart-felt charity. At the melodramatic crisis she rediscovers her lover whom she had once rejected from pride and obstinacy. The ending is fatuous. The first person account, by a young doctor, may seem a little compared to a Jamesian or a Proustian command of such narratives. But there is no need to read it with the arch gaze of a Daisy Ashford. Alger's

magazine style, with its rapid notation and generous use of dialogue, had plenty to teach the generation of Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald. Even its easy acquaintance with town scenery—with Macy's and Palmer's Theatre, the Dime Museums and visits to Delmonico's for ice-cream—had only recently been naturalized by William Denn Howells for a more ambitious type of novel. (This edition is embellished with a fine clutch of original art-work for Alger's stories, as well as photographs and etchings of old New York landmarks like the Fifth Avenue Hotel at Madison Square and Macy's on its original site at Sixth Avenue and Fourteenth Street.)

But, for all their realistic detail, it is as fairy-tales that these two novels demand to be read. Horatio Alger was a master of that oldest of all fictional forms, Greek New Comedy, with its poor little rich girls, its villains, its typhoid, its niggardly wife, its blustering husband, the elderly inamorato, its ultimate reversals and revelations. What is peculiar to Alger is that such traditional ceremonies of love must invariably be blessed by money. This is the sacred fount that can heal all ills, supplying proper sustenance or a proper roof or a proper education. Decent instincts were for Alger, as for Whittman, the precondition of American existence so that it needed only the blessing of cash to foster their potential to a radiant presence.

Yet there was a clash, which his fables never tried to resolve, between such idealism and everyday pragmatism. It was a clash, inherent in American ideology itself, between salvation by positive thinking and salvation by managerial control. The individual had both to make a personal decision to invest his talents for his neighbour's benefit and to subject himself to the impersonal forces of a market economy. In an increasingly utilitarian world, Horatio Alger plugged the old American values. The largesse of both benefactresses comes from invested capital. In an age of conspicuous consumption, as Veblen called it, the lesson of self-improvement by charity is all these fables ultimately teach. The Manhattan heiress bequeaths her funds to a needy pastor, but apparently has enough left to marry a poor artist and embark for Italy on a two year honeymoon.

When a French intellectual wishes to prove anything these days, he reaches for the opinion polls, and Lévy comes up with some good statistics. After the violent bomb attack on the synagogue in the rue Copernic in Paris in October 1980, a poll published by *L'Express* reported that 49 per cent of French people thought there were too many "North Africans" in France. In 1943, Lévy points out, 51 per cent of French people replied "no" when asked "Do you like the Jews?" Thus there is, he claims, a constant in French attitudes which can be shown statistically, as well as in other ways.

The other ways which Lévy sees in order to demonstrate the existence of a

DAVID JORDAN:  
Double Red  
156pp. Andre Deutsch. £5.95.  
0 233 97329 X

London merchant bank Thorne Reinhard is being blackmailed by a terrorist organisation which threatens to reveal details of infamous Soviet duggery dating from the beginning of the century. Whitey kid Thomas Kapo investigates. Plenty of action, but the narrative fits together surprisingly loosely. Faults are redeemed, however, by marvellous extracts from the diary of André de Grosworden, of the Imperial Russo-Siberian Bank in St Petersburg, who was involved with the infamous double agent Azzev. Once again, David Jordan implies that the best training for merchant bankers is two years with the SAS.

T. J. Binyon

## Liberty, equality, fascism . . .

By Douglas Johnson

BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY  
*L'Idéologie française*  
340pp. Paris: Grasset.  
2 246 21211 1

On May Day 1981, Bernard-Henri Lévy was the principal organizer of a mass demonstration in which representatives of the immigrant population of France marched from the Élysée Palace to the Place du Colonel Fabien. This parade of those who have been deprived of political rights thus started and ended at what were described as the twin bastions of French racism: the Presidency of the Republic and the headquarters of the French Communist Party.

It is not surprising that M. Lévy finds it easier to make enemies than friends. His new book, *L'Idéologie française*, has made him many enemies and has succeeded in what must have been his intention, that of creating a sensation. It has aroused more indignation and protest than any recent publication in France, and its defenders have tended to be mild and regretful rather than vigorous.

It is a passionate and explosive book. *L'Idéologie française* (note the definite article, it is not called "Une Idéologie française") is about fascism and racism, and it claims that both are endemic in modern French thought. Echoing Georges Marchais's proclamation of a communism which will be truly French, "un communisme aux couleurs de la France", Lévy claims that there is "un fascisme aux couleurs de la France". What might appear as accidental happenings which give rise to explosions of antisemitism such as the arrest of a junior officer who is Jewish on the charge of selling military secrets to the Germans, or the racist laws proclaimed by the government of Vichy in the wake of the greatest military defeat in French history—are made to appear an integral part of French culture. Doubtless the facts that in December, 1980, the communist mayor of Vitry personally took the lead in the destruction of an immigrant hostel in his commune, and that in the following February the communist mayor of Montigny-Lès-Cormeilles publicly denounced a working-class Moroccan family for drug-pushing, are not to be seen merely as examples of electoral tactics. Racism is ingrained in French attitudes.

When a French intellectual wishes to prove anything these days, he reaches for the opinion polls, and Lévy comes up with some good statistics. After the violent bomb attack on the synagogue in the rue Copernic in Paris in October 1980, a poll published by *L'Express* reported that 49 per cent of French people thought there were too many "North Africans" in France. In 1943, Lévy points out, 51 per cent of French people replied "no" when asked "Do you like the Jews?" Thus there is, he claims, a constant in French attitudes which can be shown statistically, as well as in other ways.

The other ways which Lévy sees in order to demonstrate the existence of a

"real" France which is both fascist and racist are dominated by his love of quotation. He takes a whole series of writers and, by giving extracts from their works, demonstrates their ideas. Some of these authors one would expect to find in such a book: Maurras, and other members of the Action Française, Gobineau, Barrès, Sorel, Drumont, Drieu La Rochelle. Others are less expected. There is, for example, an early reference to Emmanuel Mounier, the left-wing Catholic and founder of the ultra-liberal and humanist periodical *Esprit*, who is quoted in 1936 as having admired the vitality and energy of fascism. Gide makes an appearance, in which he "wonders whether a dictatorship is not required to solve France's problems. Bergson is presented as having acted in a sort of messenger-boy for Hegel and as an inspiration for those who, in the 1930s, were in search of the organic and the intuitive, a search which had sinister implications. Péguy is at one point described as "Péguy le raciste", who wanted "le soleil de France" to shine only on "la race gauloise", and who believed in a form of racism "aux couleurs de la France profonde".

Obviously, much of this has to be accepted. We are accustomed to hearing about Péguy and forms of pre-1914 fascism, when he, along with members of the Action Française and of the Cercle Charles Proudhon, and of small groups who gave themselves curious names such as "royalist-socialists", were seeking for a socialism which would be "ni juif, ni allemand". We are also accustomed to the multitude of French politicians and theorists who, exasperated by the difficulties, if not the decadence, of parliamentary government, have expressed a desire for strong and efficient rule. There is only a more sophisticated version of the popular cynicism about politicians or the simple belief that "strong government would be better than ridiculous government." It is not that we have a "poigné" is the chorus of the café. Why should the intellectuals not say the same thing, more philosophically and didactically?

But does all this add up to a culture of fascism and racism? Lévy justifies his selection of quotations by comparing it to Foucault's "archéologie du savoir", as if he were cutting into successive layers of significance. But the isolated quotation is misleading. More often than not Lévy is playing a verbal game. Because someone thinks the essential that France should have strong government, he is not necessarily a fascist (and Lévy avoids the issue of whether Bonapartism or Gaullism can be called fascist), any more than if he uses the word "race" or describes some aspect of thought as "Jewish", he is necessarily a racist. Alain de Benoist, of the Nouvelle Droite, (an old enemy of Lévy's who is strangely absent from this volume), has commented on the phenomenon of what he calls "sémitophobie", the belief that by abolishing a word, such as "race", one abolishes its subject. Lévy might be said to suffer from "sémitophobie", the belief that if you use a word then you necessarily

subscribe to any sentiment it may be held to contain. One is reminded of the complaint of British diplomats serving in Hitlerian Germany: If ever they were photographed waving from a balcony or from a train window, the published photograph made them look as if they were giving the Nazi salute.

It would be relatively easy to compile an anthology of British writers to suggest that "racism" was also a characteristic of British culture. "Blessed are the pure in race for they shall inherit the earth!" so speaks a character in one of Disraeli's novels. At about the same time many Englishmen were beginning to explain the backwardness of Africa in terms of a fundamental backwardness among African races, and there were those who explained away the unwelcome surprise of the Indian Mutiny by pointing to some unknowable quality of the Indian mind. In France, reaction to Gobineau's *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* was far from favourable. Tocqueville, who had dismissed racial explanations of American racism, was shown enthusiasm for racial persecution, and this cannot always be explained away in terms of foolishness. Sorcel was, in some ways, a remarkably perceptive thinker; at the same time he could write violently and wildly, as when he said that France's struggle against the Jews could be compared to America's struggle against the yellow peril. Many of those surrounding Pétain were remarkably able in terms of their knowledge of economics and planning, but their romanticism led to one of these young men that he had the greatest technological mind of the century only he had not yet reached the age of political puberty).

Some of Lévy's argument is simply bizarre. "Péguy nationalist? Péguy socialist?" he asks, and then dismisses the questions as being of little interest. What is important, he claims, is that the two come together, and one discovers "un national-socialisme à la française"—one is reminded of Mr Pickwick's acquaintance who was reputed to have prepared for his article on "Chinese Metaphysics" by consulting the encyclopedia first under "China" and then under "Metaphysics".

Lévy's other method of studying "notre pensée réactionnaire" is historical, but no less controversial. The Dreyfus affair, he writes, divided France into two camps, and practically led to civil war—an obvious exaggeration. Then there was Vichy, and it is on this period that Lévy bases the greatest part of his case, as he lists examples of how Vichy chose, of its own free will, to initiate the persecution of Jews, of how the Communist Party sought at certain times to cooperate with the Germans and to assist in the trial of the Third Republic's leaders (such as Léon Blum), and of how a collection of well-educated and able technocrats and civil servants came together at the Ecole des Cadres d'Ultras (near Grenoble) in order to prepare for the national revolution in which the new France would be closely associated with Nazi Germany.

Objections can be made to all these arguments. The Vichy government (as Lévy readily admits) was a varied and shifting group of people, and was far from being united in antisemitism. The Communist Party had for a time (from

1929 to 1933 for example) chosen to treat the Third Republic as a fascist organization, and if the logic whereby such imprisoned communists as Alfred Coste and François Billoux sought to join in the work of the Cour Suprême de Rome is curious, it can hardly constitute what Lévy calls "le Pétainisme rouge". Lévy admits that the whole of the Ecole d'Ultras joined the Resistance movement in November 1942, but he should also recall that many of the technocrats who were associated with Vichy, such as Gabriel L. Roy Lindur, Barnand and Pucheu, had started their careers with the Maison Worms and were denounced by more extreme collaborators as members of an Anglo-Jewish syndicate, and that such an unbalanced antisemitism as Pierre Constantini, during these years, denouncing the Jewish synarchy which was seeking to control the Vichy administration.

Things are never so simple as Lévy claims. And yet when all his mistakes are pointed out, and all the defects of his reasoning allowed for, one wonders whether there is not something in his argument after all. It remains true that France has shown enthusiasm for racial persecution, and this cannot always be explained away in terms of foolishness. Sorcel was, in some ways, a remarkably perceptive thinker; at the same time he could write violently and wildly, as when he said that France's struggle against the Jews could be compared to America's struggle against the yellow peril. Many of those surrounding Pétain were remarkably able in terms of their knowledge of economics and planning, but their romanticism led to one of these young men that he had the greatest technological mind of the century only he had not yet reached the age of political puberty).

But how can we explain the popularity of Drumont and of *La Libre Parole*, a newspaper repeatedly read both by the *curs* and by the *communards*? How can we understand the omnipresence of the innocent and martyred Dreyfus? How could otherwise honourable men attack Blum, or Mendès-France, simply because they happened to be Jewish? It is an undoubted fact that during the Occupation years there were Frenchmen who could the Germans in their racialist zeal, and that the experiment of the Vichy state was not

regarded simply as a temporary episode in French history, but as a new and exciting departure. It is also true that an intellectual group such as the Nouvelle Droite, for all that it avoids crude racialism, has helped, through its insistence on the need for racial purity in Europe as well as vis-à-vis the Eskimos and Latin-American Indians, to revive a certain climate of racialism.

France is a country which has always been susceptible to conspiracy theories of history, which has always looked suspiciously at the group fraternities within its own society and which has always sought to intellectualize the reasons for its own uncertain destiny. Where doctrinal rather than practical socialism has predominated, it has been only too easy for French thinkers to see how the bourgeoisie has exploited the proletariat, or how the bourgeoisie has, in its turn, been exploited by the Jews (or Protestant bankers, American finance-capital, multi-national companies, the Washington-Brussels-Tokyo axis). Where what de Gaulle called "the internal demons" of French history have been only too apparent, then the natural compensation has been nationalism. In the country where the words "U.S.G. Home" figured on walls long before the great vogue for graffiti began, it is surprising that there should now be slogans against Jews, Arabs, Portuguese, Africans, Turks and all those countries whose exports to France are supposedly responsible for her current economic difficulties? In a country where bureaucratic centralization has made change difficult, it is inevitable that there should have been a cult of action, and that people should take a benevolent view of such characteristics as impatience and energy.

Bernard-Henri Lévy is short on explanations, and short also on recommendations. In his earlier books he regretted the existence of totalitarianism but failed to suggest what could be done to avoid it, other than to change the nature of man and thereby get rid of "la barbarie à visage humain". Those who led, and who were led by, the events of 1968, have always been strong starters and disappointing finishers. But, like 1968, *L'Idéologie française* cannot be dismissed lightly. It remains in the mind and its challenge cannot be ignored.

### Grey Matter

The ogling bottle cork with tasselled fax howling and scragging, rolling goo-goo eyes is glippo King Farouk, whose lawd leas says:

I've had the lot, my lad, all shapes and sizes

One ought we kept him prancing and he poured, filtered through his brains, his bulk of booze. The whisky pentacloons sans ash or cord swashed dad to the hark of twin taboos. As King Farouk's ayes rolled, dad rolled his own: That King Farouk! he said, and almost came (though lo the and it proved too near the bone) to, mantioning both sex and death by name.

I weka dad with what's left. King Laar's stare stock, though I shake him, and his fixed Sphinx smile take in the ultimate a man cao baro and that dry Nothingness beyond the Nile.

Tony Harrison

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## The Woods

'Search me', I said. 'I'm a city boy myself.  
They must be crocuses.'  
- Saul Bellow, *Humboldt's Gift*

Two years we spent  
down there, in a quaint  
outbuilding bright with recent paint.

A green retreat,  
secluded and sedate,  
part of a once great estate,  
it watched our old  
bone-shaker as it growled  
with gnats and groceries through heat and cold,  
and heard you tocsin  
meal-times with a spoon  
while I sat working in the sun.

Above the yard  
an old clock had expired  
the night Lenin arrived in Petrograd.

Bourbons and Romanovs  
had removed their gloves  
in the drawing-rooms and alcoves  
of the manor-house;  
but these illustrious  
ghosts never imposed on us.

Enough that the pond  
steamed, the apples ripened,  
the chestnuts on the gravel opened.

Ragwort and hemlock,  
clovefoll and ledystock,  
throve in the shadows at the back;  
beneath the trees  
foxgloves and wood-anemones  
looked up with fearful, metamorphic eyes.

We woke the rooks  
on narrow, winding walks  
familiar from the story-books,  
or visited  
a disused garden shed  
where gas-masks from the war decayed;  
and we knew peace  
splintering the thin ice  
on the bath-tub drinking-trough for cows.

But how could we  
survive indefinitely  
so far from the city and the sea?

Pindog, at last,  
too creamy for our taste  
the fat profusion of the feast,  
we travelled on  
to doubt and speculation,  
our blitheness and our proper portion.

Another light  
than ours convenes the mute  
attention of those woods tonight -  
while we, released  
from that pale paradise,  
consult the darkness in soother place.

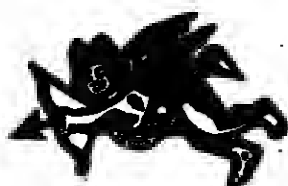
Derek Mahon

## remainders

BY ERIC KORN

The usual overdressed and be-titled crowd filled the pews with their scented pampers bodies, rustling their silks, patting their dyed hair and surreptitiously powdering their noses, without a thought for the young couple embarking on the new and somewhat precarious craft of married life on to the uncharted sea of the future.

(Barbare Cartland, *Jig-Saw*, Duckworth, 1925.)



I've been feeling a trifle idiotic recently. If you have too, you could join the British Idiotic Society, if it still survives. This is far less fun than it sounds, being formed to promote IDO, and its associated ideals of World Peace through Vegetarianism and Dhammapadism. IDO was an artificial language designed to supplement Esperanto (Esp. "ido" equals "son of"). "Idiotic" is unrecorded by OED (can I have a contributor's tie, please?) but is attested to by a printed strident around 1911, one of the items in an album of idiotic postcards and ephemera, once the property of a Cambridge hotelier, which I have just semi-accidentally acquired.

It appears that the moment the hotelier publicized his adherence to the movement the postcards came flooding in, offering congratulations, requesting the exchange of cards and stamps, and reproaching him for his prose style (which was full of "Esperantoida vort"). From France, Germany and outlying portions of Austria-Hungary they came, portraits of Comenius, "our great Bohemian" views of Mala Strana in Prague and Krakow townhall, Jenny Hesselquist the Swedish bombshell. There is a note of encouragement from Louis Couturat, the mathematical philosopher and architect of IDO ("refuter la Esp-isti" - the Esp-isti still regard him as Judas), propaganda postcards showing the IDO star or the IDO dove shedding respectively light and olive leaves over a battered globe - one card, curiously, bears the stamp of the Staffurst Volapükklub Zenodid, which suggests that some chapters jumped strings at Esperanto on the way. (Volapük was the first of the international languages to become a movement: the trouble with it was that it was extremely ugly, and much harder to learn than any natural language. "O fat has bin bin in stis" is the start of the Lord's Prayer in Volapük and that is enough about that.)

Through peace and war, peace and war, the IDOs ploughed on, earnest for peace but with the most minimal influence on history; there are conferences here and there, a photograph of sops congressists gathered round a waterfall, the sticker of the "Internacia Unlono de Vegetariani Idisti"; "Venez ad Sopron dum 1930", sheets and sheets of very pretty labels advertising Tobler Sulsiana Lakto Chokolado, evidence of some-

great Schiam ("mi austenas le Programo dil Demokreta Opozantaro"). The Crusade against Babel petered out at last, alas. The correspondence thins, and the last postcard, from the vice-president of the English branch, is poignant: "me ofte pensas pri mea old amiko... quale sempre, Idisti trovas kardial bon-cepto en Lewisham..."

One of the most curious items in the collection is a round-robin postcard, evidently a minor pastime before the First World War. It left Cambridge on the morning of January 12, 1912 with a penny stamp and a missive address in Brussels. The Belgian recipient added (on January 14) ten centimes, "konvokala saluto al la adreso de a friend in Italy, leaving plenty of space for more addresses. From Italy it went to Germany, from Germany to Luxembourg and from Luxembourg, on January 24, it headed back to Cambridge, where we may safely assume the sender received it within two weeks of despatch. Dare one contemplate how much this would cost and how long it would take today, if it was not so instantly confiscated as infringing a score of regulations? Of course thanks to the miracles of instantaneous data transfer, geosynchronous satellites and telephone answering machines, you can now ring yourself up and get an answer within minutes..."

The reason for the decline in practically everything except international telephone communications is, without a doubt, lack of respect for Values; or to put it another way, that too few members of the industrious classes devote their spare time to acquiring a proper expertise in the rules of precedence and correct deferential address, rules which were in fact designed by an obliging providence to ensure that there is no leisure in a well-conducted state for those twin banes of the Lower Orders, bear-baiting and Political Economy.

To a praiseworthy effort to amend this, Messrs Adam and Charles Black have just published the seventh edition of their *Titles and Forms of Address: a Guide to Correct Use*, price £3.95 paperback, and if you think it should have been published not in paper but in full leavot morocco extra with gilt straw-berly leaves in each corner, then you haven't understood a thing I'm about to say, which is that if you are born to the purple you are born knowing that the daughter of a duke who has married a commoner goes into dinner before her sister who has married a baronet ("No, mumslu, let's wait for Auntie Flo"), and if you are born to less elevated sections of the spectrum then you have to sit down with A & C Black and a pot of strong tea and swot it up.

One thing you have to do is memorize the order of precedence of dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons - Don't Men Everywhere Value Breeding? was what our Mam taught us, emphasizing each capital letter with the stroke of a loofah as she gave us our Saturday night bath in the front parlour. Not that she'd take everything in the book as Gospel, Our Mam; "Husbands take no

style or dignity from their wives", she'd read with a sceptical sniff, "A husband's name or status is not altered in any way by his wife's degrees." So she'd pass her toll-scarred hands through her greying hair, purse her lips, and go on to explain why the 8th Duke of Devonshire's brother's eldest son's brothers became Lord Richard and Lord John Cavendish, while his mother remained Lady Edward Cavendish ("But it should be clearly understood that these privileges cannot be claimed as a right..."). And then she would clear her throat and read her favourite passage: "to help us to our explanation we will create a Duke of Middlesex who is also a Marquess of Huddersfield and Earl of Ramsgate, to name only his principal titles. (Italics Our Mam's). His family name shall be Smith..."

It isn't all as cut and dried as she made it sound those long-ago evenings in the plumage cottage to Bexhill. For one thing there is the problem of Dowager Peeresses who prefer to be known by their Christian names - "if this is so she will probably make an announcement in the press". Well that's all right, since any secretary worth her correcting fluid will cut such notices from *The Daily Telegraph* and file them with out being told ("I think you will find that 'Mary, Ducesse of Middlesex' is the preferred form, Sir"), but what about younger sons of earls? "The title is never printed on visiting cards, so without inner knowledge it is difficult to identify the rank. When it is desired to identify it, however, reference to the holder's parentage would be permissible." Something along the lines of "Gloss print for me mate here Tom Collins whose father is the Earl of Earl's Court".

And did you know that gynae-cologists are treated as surgeons in England and Wales and as doctors in Scotland? Why JP precedes MP? (Because JP is just the voice of the people, but MP is a Royal Appointment.) Why the Master of Ballantrae was so called (their apparent or presumptive to a Scottish viscount)? That Mayors when Ladies are Mr Mayor or - colloquially - Madam Mayor, or Your Worship, but Mayors are never Your Worship except when they are sitting as JPs? That Roman Catholic Archbishops never have territorial titles in official correspondence? That the White Knight is dormant while O Sionghill has been called The Fox since 1527? That Rabbis should be addressed as Rabbi Cohen (not so, Messrs A. and C.; Rabbis Cohen are about as orthodox as Lady Cardinals), Archmandrites as Dear Father, Benedictines as Dom Harry and Trappists not at all? That when you write letters after your name, the membership of learned societies should be in the order of the foundation of the society, "as a general rule", so you need to know if the Playboy Club began before or after the Glastonbury and District Flying Saucer Club?

And ber comes MacDermot Prince of Coolavin, chief of the fifteen families exiled by the Genealogical Office, Dublin Castle; and the Dowager Mrs Mackvickular of Mackvickular; and Deputy High Stewards, and Lords and Lieutenants and Lords-Lieutenant and Vice-Lords-Lieutenant (but no Lords of course) and Ordained Professors and The Most Exalted Order of The Star of India.

I've a great admiration for the editorial efficiency displayed by Mansell, the publishers of the 700-odd volume *National Union Catalogue of Pre-1956 Imprints*, but among a billion catalogue card copies from all over North America, a few black sheep are bound to slip in. I recently bought an obscure English obstetric book, and on looking it up in *NUC* was somewhat taken aback to find printed beneath the bibliographic details the following words: "Anyone who shells out good bucks for the crap in this catalogue is being royally screwed by us."

... all our simple ideas ... are derived from simple impressions which they exactly represent." - David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

This, in David Hume's simple and elegant formulation, is the essence of empiricism: all our ideas are but the after-taste, the inner echo of sense impressions. Recent more scholastic versions of empiricism have not really improved on this formulation. The central idea of empiricism can also be summed up in a phrase widely and erroneously attributed to Aristotle - there is nothing in the mind which was not first in the senses. The idea that the content of our minds is hounded by the senses seems simple: like other simple ideas, it has revolutionary implications. It followed up rigorously. One way of approaching the fashionable doctrine of *structuralism* is to see that it is a denial of the empiricist theory of mind, of this clear or after-taste theory of human ideas.

Hume, with his customary honesty and candour, noticed and reported an exception to his doctrine of the sensory origin of all ideas. He knew of course that "complex" ideas can be arrived at by re-combining simple elements in a way not anticipated by experience; but as long as those simple elements themselves all had an experiential origin, this did not create a problem for him. But there was, he noted, a more fundamental exception to his crucial principle:

Suppose ... a person to have enjoyed his sight for thirty years, and to have become perfectly well acquainted with colours of all kinds, excepting one particular shade of blue ... Let all the different shades of that colour, except that single one, be placed before him, descending gradually from the deepest to the lightest; it is plain that he will perceive a blank where that shade is wanting.

It was obvious to Hume that such a man would indeed acquire the idea of that Missing Shade of Blue, though he never had the good fortune of experiencing it as an impression; and thus, the central principle on which Hume built the entire edifice of his classical formulation of empiricism, is flawed by one significant counter-example. This evidently did not bother Hume very much; after the candid admission of the exception, he proceeds with the edification of his system with equanimity, and never returns to the problem of the Missing Shade. Evidently he thought that the exception did not matter much; if our minds can on occasion attain ideas, simply in virtue of their place on continuous spectra between familiar polarities, where most of the other elements in the spectra had indeed appeared in our stream of experience, well that was a minor exception, and one which could be accommodated in his system.

It is of the essence of *structuralism*, that it stands Hume on his head. It propounds a theory of the human mind or of comprehension which is the precise loverion of Hume's account. What Hume considered an exception to the main principle of how we construct our mental pictures of the world - an exception so minor that it could be insouciantly by-passed - is, for *structuralism*, the very norm or paradigm of an intellectual operation; and what for Hume is the norm, is for it an exception which it can scarcely allow at all, and must exclude with more severity than Hume ever showed towards his exception. The Missing Shade of Blue is not an exception. It is the very model of our relation to things we claim to know. On the other hand, anything beyond the limits of the polarities of our sensibility, and not simply the added to our world as an after-taste.

On this view, it is not the case that our experience 'reveals' to us, step by step, and by as geometry and old

from some kind of mysterious and finally unbounded reservoir of possible experiences or impressions, this or that set of items, which then also occasionally arrange themselves along spectra strung out between a couple of poles - thus enabling us subsequently to plug a few experimental holes, which had arisen from the mysterious failure of experience to play itself out to the full, like a roulette wheel which in a long sequence stubbornly omits one number. Not at all. It is the opposite which obtains. It is just because our sensibility is so constructed as to be capable of registering the entire spectrum between the extreme poles of the darkest and the lightest blue, that we can note and retain and record the shades of blue which happen to present themselves for our attention. There are no Missing Shades; or rather, all shades are equally present or missing. Their presence at any particular roll-out doesn't matter. Experience is not some large and tolerant aperture through which simply anything can pass, and which we then note and file away in our echo or after-taste collection. Our sensibility, (or range of possible experiences, or capacity to conceptualize), has its limits and its structure, and these limits and the principles which generate them, though we may not be able to observe them directly, we can hope to reconstruct from the range of material found within any one mind or work or language or culture.

This is the central idea. Plotinus observed that the eye could not see the sun, were it not sun-like. *Structuralism* in a way endeavours to operationalize this cryptic insight, to explore just how a given cognitive system contains the particular range of sensitivities within which this "or that" object then becomes possible.

One of the successful precedents which inspired *structuralism* to venture into other fields occurred in phonetics. The range of sounds which contribute towards meaningful speech, the "phonemes" of various languages, is not infinite; and more significantly, it is not random or devoid of principle. It appears that the individual sounds which are the bricks of which language are made, are generated in a relatively simple way from the various constraints or polarities available to the human ear and throat. Any one given language is unlikely to use all the available polarities; but suppose it uses some number *n* of such contrasts, such as "voiced" and "unvoiced", for instance. Then a "phoneme" in that language, a sound whose replacement or absence would change the identity of the "word" in which it occurs, can be defined as other of each of these *n* binary choices.

It was the success of this account or something fairly like this, which has inspired emulation in other social and human sciences. Note that it was that the linguists were reported as having "discovered" in "phonemes" they took properties which could be identified physically or physiologically - properties of sounds or of their relation to the human ear and showed how, out of these neutral, "voiceless" elements, available as it were in inter-cultural space, the actual language-sensitivities of various cultures and languages (which of course do not all of them have the same phonemes) can be built up. Thus the mystery of the "generation" of cultural elements from pre-cultural raw materials is laid bare.

Phonetics is not the only sphere which sets a precedent for *structuralism*. The spirit of modern logic is similar. At the beginning of the century, it was still Cartesian: the aspiration was to locate and formulate firm premises, on which a safe edifice could be erected; it would not need to retrace any steps, and be as geometry and old

logic had once been thought to be. This aspiration is gone; instead, systems are erected with a view to exploring what a given set of starting-points and rules can engender, what may or may not occur within it, and how much the actual inferences made by mathematicians and others can be mapped on it. The "generative" revolution in linguistics in a broader sense is of course inspired by a similar image: hypothetical systems of "deep grammar" and "transformation rules" are invented, with a view to exploring whether what they can engender corresponds to the actual wealth and limits of what is intuitively acceptable in a given language. In other words, *structuralism* is either inspired by or part of a wider movement or state of mind, with a shared deep image of how human and social phenomena are to be approached.

A word of qualification: I have approached *structuralism* by way of highlighting its contrast to empiricism. This might give a false impression. The aspect of empiricism which is most present to the mind of the educated humanist, *structuralism* is its cognitive puritanism, its insistence that man should remain within the bounds of the human; not so much that he is the measure of all things, but that he must be content with the human measure of himself and everything. *Structuralism* is not really opposed to this isolationist aspect of empiricism; it does not issue exit visas to the transcendent, at most it promises access to a hidden human core, rather than a transcendent Other. It was not inspired by some quest of the Other, nor offended by the empiricist denial of the Other. That question does not raise its head. Its quarrel with empiricism is, in this sense, a family quarrel between fellow-isolationists, fellow adherents of the view that the proper study of mankind is man.

But this point brings out the important way in which Immanuel Kant is an ancestor of the *structuralist*. Indeed a proto-*structuralist*. He also abjured the hope of a leave-pass to the Other. His quarrel with Hume was roughly the same as that of *structuralism* with empiricism: he insisted that an important part of our mental content was generated, in an orderly and predictable way, by the very structure of the human mind, rather than arriving as an echo of experience. (In a quiet kind of way, even his deity was really made by the human mind, though this did not preclude some rather uncheckable correspondence between the mind-made deity and the independently existing one. But it was the one we had ourselves made which did all the work, as far as we were concerned.)

If Kant was a proto-*structuralist*, what then is the difference (if any) between him and the current kind? There are a number of interesting differences. He was not interested in patches of blue, missing or present. Patches of blue could safely be left to Hume, and we could know them, for all Kant cared, in the way in which Hume had said we knew anything. The idea that the content of our minds was generated by so inner structure was applied by Kant only to a select élite of our ideas, such as the famous "categories" (though due to them alone) which guided, organized, and pervaded the ordinary ideas; ordinary humble ideas might well (but for their as it were *encadrément* by the categories) be merely the after-tastes of sensations, as Hume had claimed. Modern *structuralists* are not so selective and elitist. They look for the traces of the work of our generative sensibility everywhere, amongst the humble ideas as well as the most elevated, and sometimes quite obscure, seemingly trivial. Where an old-fashioned, snobbish investigator might throw himself on the

royal or divine decrees of a society, a *structuralist* will also look at the menu of its paupers.

Connected with this is a difference concerning the issue of whether these structures are One or Many. Kant obviously thought that all human minds (perhaps all rational spirits) were endowed with the very same basic structure. This meshed in with his conceptual elitism: it is only too obvious that cultures differ in their mythologies, gastronomies, sartorial habits and so forth. All the more reason for not seeking, in those spheres (or at least in their concrete details), evidence of our shared, universal deep mental structure. By contrast, our latter-day *structuralists* feel very much at home in those culturally differential nuances and details. The idea of a universal generic human mind is not entirely absent from their work and is on occasion alluded to, and it is of course explicitly present in the work of Chomsky. Nevertheless, especially in anthropology, they seek structures, rather than one universal structure.

Finally there is a difference of motive. Kant's interest in the question of how we know (to which he gave a *structuralist* answer) was inspired by the desire to establish just what we did and did not know, to underwrite that which, in his view, we really did know, and to neutralize the lure of that which we could not know. This epistemological motive is largely absent in contemporary *structuralists*. They want to know how we know, and how we construct our world, simply because they want to know just that, for its own sake, not as a means to something else. Their execution of the programme may

sometimes fall short of Kant's, as we shall see; but their aim is more forthright and direct.

Social anthropology as practised in the intellectual Sterling Zone since the First World War is a reasonably homogeneous discipline, with a common style, tradition and criteria, facilitating comparison and the accumulation of knowledge. It began when Malinowski replaced Frazer as the paradigmatic anthropologist. The practitioners form a cohesive guild, whose code was initially set down by Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. The achievements of this school are impressive, and the intellectual empire which they and their disciples, and the disciples of their disciples, have left behind, is larger than the political Empiro of which it was once the shadow, which it has survived, and of which it was sometimes unfairly considered to be the servant.

If one were asked to single out one conceptual distinction which marks the members of this remarkable school (whose basic style of thought has survived to this day, notwithstanding the flirtations of some of its members with other schools), then I think that without serious doubt the distinction to be singled out would be that between Structure and Culture. The pervasive use of this opposition owes more to Radcliffe-Brown than it does to Malinowski. I shall not attempt any formal definition of this distinction, but shall instead try to convey its spirit.

There are aspects of life which are real and earnest. The survival and maintenance of a human

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group, in the face of external threats and inner conflicts, the definition and defence of external boundaries, the internal maintenance of order, the securing of provisions, the allocation of duties, the training of the young - these are very serious matters indeed. It follows that in these fields, the culture group may well fail to survive. The effective performance of these tasks requires the setting up of different roles, of subcategories of human beings within the total group, each with its special rights and duties whose fulfilment contributes to the perpetuation of the group. This internal division of labour constitutes the *structure* of a society.

But we have not exhausted the life of a community when we have described its structure. To employ a pun once used by the late Maurice Freedson in the title of a lecture, there are not merely rights and duties, there are also *rites and values*. The different positions of individuals and categories of individuals is signalled, in a given society, by what they wear, how they talk, what they eat, where they sit or stand, their given positions, etc. This accumulation of such rites in signals also forms a system. This is the *culture* of a society. Roughly speaking, one might put it this way: structure determines the choice of a bride, culture determines what the bride wears.

The "British" anthropological tradition was specifically concerned with structure. It has been suggested that this may be connected with the widespread use of indirect rule in the British Empire, which made the political and social structure of governed communities of great practical concern (by contrast with, say, the situation in the United States, where the recording of Red Indian culture may have been a more acute preoccupation than the utilization of their structure for administrative ends). To put it in the crudest and somewhat male-chauvinist-pig way, structure is related to the serious concerns of production, politics, defence, and the supernatural, when it really impinges on social life; culture is closer to the preoccupations of the barm, the barber, the dressmaker.

It is not denied that the two spheres are interrelated. Stendhal observed of early nineteenth-century warfare, that military science was closely related to that of the tailor. That's just the point. One glance by an expert at a uniform of the time could tell him

the rank, unit, specialism, and perhaps the ethnic affiliation and social standing of the wearer. And precisely this was the interest taken in the cultural system by traditional, bloody, commonsensical structuralists (not to be confused with our latter-day *structuralists*): culture was a system of signals conveying the ritual, economic, political ranking and grouping of individuals. This might be called old-fashioned structuralism. Culture wasn't exactly ignored or despised, but it did have just a touch of the epiphenomenal about it.

There is a striking analogy between this kind of structuralism and the philosophy abandoned there but continuing to haunt ordinary thought between Primary and Secondary Qualities. The former, like location and impenetrability, really characterize things; the latter, like colour or warmth, are merely the signals induced in a given sensibility by an object, but not "really" parts of the object: to a different sensibility, the same object may well signal its presence by quite a different sound or colour. So it is with structure and culture. Structure is solidly there and similar structures are found in diverse places; culture is produced or elicited from the sensibilities of observers or participants.

It was no accident that this approach was combined with the aspiration to make anthropology into a kind of natural science of societies - and also with a markedly ahistorical approach. Structure (in this sense) would, it was hoped, be amenable to generalization, comparison and orderly explanation. Not so much was to be expected from culture. It was part of the structure of society that certain categories of men were eligible for certain posts, had access to certain categories of brides, and so forth; but it was merely a matter of history or accident (if indeed these could ever be distinguished) why such and such a status or position was indicated by this or that sartorial, behavioural or other marker. The location and distribution of markers seemed eligible to understanding, the choice of tokens for markers did not.

I may have exaggerated the implicitly dismissive attitude to culture contained in this approach, but in some measure or another it was there, and was implicit in the style of analysis employed by the school. We have here what is in effect an Echo or Signal theory of culture.

Now the echo theory of culture, implicitly contained in old-fashioned, male-chauvinist-pig structuralism, is not exactly identical or identifiable with the echo theory of thought and knowledge found in time and transmitted by him to a large part of the empiricist tradition. In the one case, there is an echo theory of all of our ideas, deriving them from antecedent experiences; and in the other, there is an echo theory of cultural signals (in other words, a sub-class of our working ideas) explaining their role and importance (but not the choice of tokens) in terms of the system of important sub-groupings and roles in a given society. The one theory is genetic, and purports to explain how we came by all our ideas; the other in a sense abjures genetic explanations altogether, and is instead functional explaining the signalmarkers in terms of their role. It seems to be agnostic about the question of how we came by particular elements in our stock of cultural signals, but purports to explain only why they have the importance they have, in terms of the function (boundary-marking of sub-groups and status) which they perform in society, and which would have to be performed by some other set of tokens if this lot were not available.

But while the theories are by no means identical, they seem to be very similar in spirit. There is a marked whiff of reductionism about both. Radical empiricism, the after-taste or after-sense theory of ideas, offends those of us who like to endow ideas with a Platonic reality (whether in order to make mathematics a matter of discovery rather than mere construction, or to endow norms and values with a more than human authority, or both); the echo-signal theory of culture offends those who take their culture with becoming seriousness. If the old bloody commonsensical structuralism is right, then, to put it bluntly, the status of the Arts Council is strictly comparable to that of the department of the Greater London Council responsible for cleaning and maintaining public signposts: important, of course, most praiseworthy indeed, for it would be a shame if the Gents and Ladies signs became so dirty as to be illegible - but when all is said and done, not really central to our life. Culture becomes (literally) etiquette, or a set of labels which will tell us what is what, but does not greatly affect that which it labels.

So old-fashioned structuralism could hardly appeal to those who

take culture seriously. I am not suggesting that old-fashioned structural-functional anthropologists were a pack of philistines. This is not so, and it can easily be shown to be false: their houses and apartments often bulge with carvings and objects d'art collected from their field areas. The point is that is something quite different: old-fashioned structuralism simply was not suitable for export into fields which, almost by definition, only deal with cultural products (for instance, Eng Lit). What practitioners of such a subject were eager to say, by way of definition or legitimization of his pursuit, that he treated of a system of signals, which in virtue of historical accidents, beyond the reach of any rational explanation, happened to be used by the members of a given speech or cultural community to indicate their differences or rank? They did not much care to see themselves as a pack of glorified signpost-painters (though to preside over the mysteries of how an empire culture is generated, that would be a different kettle of fish altogether). No, no, the prospects of exporting the old structuralism to other departments, of colonizing the faculties of humanities, were distinctly slender.

Not so with *structuralism*. It has had a *success* in such fields. For it takes culture seriously, and treats it as autonomous. It clearly holds that culture has its reasons of which not only the mind, but also the political structure of a society, know nothing. The system of signs, in its view, generated by some central core which, whatever it is, and wherever it is, is clearly not to be identified with the political or economic organization of the society in question. This much is plain. This also converges with the recently fashionable Parisian idea that theorizing is itself a kind of *praxis* (i.e. intellectuals are as good as workers) and ergo, theorizing is freed both from shame and from the constraint of facts.

All this in effect gives us what I suspect is the best access to the significance of *structuralism*. It is a movement which emerges at the confluence, as it were, of the denial of two related Echo theories - the echo theory of knowledge, and the echo theory of culture. It tries to apply to concrete ethnographic and other materials a "generative" model of culture which is inspired by or parallel to generative models of human cognitive capacities. *Structuralism* takes culture with total seriousness, and is particularly at home in cultural areas such as

mythology, gastronomy, symbolism, literature. There is admittedly one odd man out in the list of typical *structuralist* preoccupations, which does not fit in with my own notion that *structuralism* is a *kinship*. The most distinguished *structuralist* first became famous precisely by his work in this field. But it may or may not be significant that Sir Edmund Leach, in his study of the thought of Lévi-Strauss, singles out kinship precisely as the area in which Lévi-Strauss was least successful.

There is another root of *structuralism* which is worth singling out. It is opposed to empiricism not merely with respect to the echo theory of ideas, but also with respect to the status of explanatory concepts. Empiricism tends to prescribe (trespassing beyond the bounds of experience; hence when explanations invoke elements which can never be actually experienced, empiricism tends to treat them as convenient fictions, as pieces of shorthand which essentially sum up patterns of experience, and only seemingly go beyond them. The "covering law" is the essence of explanation; non-experiential terminology in it are just conceptual devices.

*Structuralism* is not concerned with challenging this attitude at all along the line. Rather, it exploits the fact that in one particular sphere - the human - this attitude loses its plausibility. When we explain regularities of human conduct in terms of structures which are not directly observable in the conduct, we are far more inclined to think that these structures "really" exist. In other words, we are more inclined to be Realists (in the sense of believing in the real existence of entities not experienced, but postulated by explanatory schemes) with respect to man and society, than we are with respect to nature. The human mind is not just a shorthand term summing up our range of intelligent perceptions; we are more inclined to think that there really is a structure which generates that range.

This attitude is further encouraged by the failure to find any reliable regularities or "covering laws" in actual human conduct, and the relative success of the "generative" strategy, which does not even try to look for causal order in surface sequences, but endeavours instead to locate the mechanism responsible for the bursts or limits of the surface events. This method works even in spheres actually designed to preclude surface regularities, such as a roulette wheel. Imagine an archaeologist finding a record in an undeciphered language, which is (though he does not know it) the notes kept by a croupier in some prehistoric Monte Carlo. Our archaeologist is a *structuralist*, and he soon identifies the pattern in the notes. He does not know what the entries refer to, but to hermitage he knows that it is not external reference which gives life to a sign, but its place in a generated system. And he soon tumbles to its structure: here is a world of opposed polarities - Red and Black, Odd and Even, Under and Over. Sixteen, which combine and recombine in a dramatic manner, thus no doubt reinforcing and confirming the limits of the world of this community. But occasionally, the series is interrupted by the mysterious and elusive O which plainly eludes, transcends, sublates and incorporates all the binary tensions in an explosive and precocious unity, simultaneously overcoming the oppositions of this world and yet reminding us in the manner of their vigour, rather in the manner in which the suspension of logic in rituals and *rites de passage* in our own society help the participant both to escape the limits of his world, and to accept and understand them, etc.

I put all this in to show that I too can write *structuralist* prose and apply it to material, though no doubt not terribly well. But the relevant point is this: the generative model can work even in spheres where the more conventional "covering law" strategy fails

to find anything; and the pursuit of covering law, has not been outstandingly successful in human and social studies. The underlying ontology of the *structuralist* approach - the belief in the reality of persistent explanatory cores - has a plausibility in the human and social fields which it lacks in nature.

If this is what *structuralism* is, if I have correctly identified its own generative core, the central ideas and reactions which engender its surface manifestations, then the question can be asked: What are its merits? What are its possibilities and its limitations? No doubt it is an excellent thing that those who wish to take culture seriously should be granted a charter for doing so; but over and above this we also wish to know whether it also advances our understanding of things.

As a theory of society, or an approach to the study of society, it seems to be seriously marred by a tendency towards a certain idealism. The idea of a generative core freely playing itself out, so to speak, and being allowed to indulge in a free run, in which the range of its possibilities will be actualized, so that we can then reconstruct the core from the visible and actualized range - such an idea is inspired by dreams in which constraints are largely absent. But most social domains are not of that kind. I think this can best be conveyed by an imaginary example. Imagine that the following article appears on the financial pages of the press:

The Polish economy is in a state of acute crisis owing to the shortage of L-s, without which it cannot function. The newly patented process for extracting L-s from the Baltic having proved uneconomical, and the Russians having charged excessive prices for the high-yielding L-s from Kazakhstan, the Polish government now places all its hopes on deep L-s, drilling in Silesia. If this fails, the Polish government will feel compelled to introduce L-rationing both in the press and in private correspondence. The town council of Lodz has offered a large prize for the most suitable new name for the city.

We know this grim news item to be fictitious. The story may not be worth much, but Polish authorities can print as many L-s as they like, without fearing that the resultant inflation will make L-s unusable. The use of platitudes, or alphabetic tokens is predicated precisely on the assumption that they are almost free, that their use involves virtually no opportunity cost. It is precisely the extreme cheapness of sounds, and marks on paper, which has led to their use for communication. Except for special circumstances, (eg. when composing telegrams), we do not count the cost of marks, for it is negligible. In fact, in speech, production and consumption are indistinguishable; we are already in that blessed state, anticipated and desired by Marx, when the work of self-expression flows into each other (a cheering thought, I suppose).

*Structuralism* was inspired by fields (initially, phonetics) where a generative system can, so to speak, play itself out to the full, because of the near-costlessness of its items. But this blessed condition most emphatically does not apply in other areas. Society may use codes but, *pace the structuralists*, it is not itself a code. It is a system operating under considerable constraints not chosen by itself. My fictitious Polish example is based on the fancy that a Polish phoneme should suddenly start to resemble a raw material. But are *structuralists* justified in talking as if a society's use of raw materials resembled its use of phonemes?

Connected with this criticism is the problem of time and stability. The *structuralist* model assumes that there is indeed a persisting core, which can be assumed to be playing itself out (given the assumption, criticized above, that there are no constraints and shortages, inhibiting such free play), and is not very much affected by feedback from events to core. Such an assumption has the plausibility in, for instance, linguistics. Languages change, but slowly,

rather in the way a glacier flows. Despite its flow, a short or momentary change to a static object, and a linguistic can do the same with language. Moreover, it is easy to conceive the location for the "deep structure" of a language: in one sense, it can be located in our neuro-physiology. (Though neurophysiologists are as yet a long way from locating it); and in another sense, it can be placed in the ongoing custom of large speech communities. Although these communities have a population turnover, it is very slow in comparison with the fabulously large number of speech acts performed, so that the rules governing those acts can be thought of as subsisting in the mechanisms governing the linguistic behaviour of the community. In brief: the supposition of a persisting core assumes that it is fairly stable, can be located somewhere, and is not constantly affected by surface events.

All these assumptions are highly plausible for language; but they are most implausible for very many human institutions, say political ones. The feedback of many political acts on the underlying political structure is not negligible, but frequently enormous. There is no stable political *langue*, which would only be negligibly transformed by any one use of the political *parole*. This is one further reason for being sceptical of any wholesale transfer of the *structuralist* paradigm from some aspects of social life to all of them. It is precisely the favoured areas of old-fashioned structuralists which are least amenable to *structuralism*. Is it an accident that Lévi-Strauss is alleged to have expressed a lack of interest in political anthropology?

It is this leaning, inherent in the underlying model, towards an idealist assumption of a stable, autonomous mental core, free from cost and constraint and constant change, which makes the *structuralist* Marxist alignment so paradoxical. It is a liaison which inevitably reminds one of the famous story of the head of a very elegant, liberal and enlightened Cambridge college, who was meant to observe at a wedding, with a nod of the head towards the happy couple - I have kept both of them, and I can recommend neither to the other. Perhaps there are explanations of this bizarre attraction. Marxists have their own quarrel with empiricism, usually referred to these days as positivism, which appears to be the code-name for my attempt to invoke facts against Marxist theses. As all facts are by definition on the surface, their invocation is a shameless defence of the status quo which encourages such superficial and hence harmless research; by contrast, the unmaking of the established order can and must only be carried out through an understanding of those deeper and above all more total structures, which however are only accessible through correct theories (which cannot be checked by mere surface facts, etc., though they are available to the right people. In this selected by the theory itself). This is also known as the Frankfurt/Panthe Opening, and there is no known answer to it. In defence of *structuralism*, it must be said that they are not interested in ignoring or denying facts (the main *structuralist* has amassed vast quantities of them), but only in imposing their own explanations on them. But there seems to be an elective affinity between the two trends in their claims to possession of privileged access to the deep. Perhaps there is no mystery. Left-bank *marxism* is in any case so very crypto-idealist (mystical, autological or both), that its liaison with another idealism ought not to puzzle us.

But our concern is with *structuralism*, and the validity of its deep explanations of the facts with which, admittedly, it does have dealings. Here we come to another worry. Do they really probe deep, do they reach depths other than those of the cultural phenomena which are allegedly being explained? Compare them with the great proto-*structuralist*, Kant, though he could explain the shared formal features of the *Lebenswelt* of all men (which he mistakenly supposed always con-

tained a *Protosubject* and the instrument of development of mind, by going back to a delimited number of elements - spatial and temporal sensibility, our capacity to group objects under concepts, to combine concepts in judgments, and the tendency to systematize judgments into systems, preferably pointing to a single apex. Given this, our world followed, he thought. Whether or not he succeeded in establishing this, note that the explanatory elements are few in number, and different in kind from the world explained, and thus the explanation (were it correct) really would get us somewhere.

Or take proto-*structuralist* Durkheim. Unlike Kant, he thought human worlds were only generically, and not specifically, similar. But what they all shared with each other, though not with animals, was the presence of *compulsive* concepts. Like Kant, he assimilated moral and conceptual compulsions to each other, thus giving science and morality ultimately the same basis. He thought he could show how our compulsive concepts - and thus our humanity - were engendered by communal ritual. So where the philosopher could once only infer or reconstruct the presuppositions of our capacity to think, the ethnographer could now actually observe them by joining in the tribal dance. What for Kant was never directly observable became accessible to anthropological fieldwork, if Durkheim was right. Once again, we are not concerned with whether he was successful in the execution of his programme; what matters is that if his argument was correct, it constituted a genuine explanation, by taking us to another level (namely ritual), and explaining something much larger and more complex in terms of its effects. Bertrand Russell derided the social contract theory of language, which would make an assembly of hitherto speechless elders, solemnly agreeing henceforth to call a cow a

cow. Durkheim by concentrating on the social contract, formulated a social contract theory of thought and morality which, by no means at all in vain, the phoneticians actually recognized by the members of a given speech community as specimens of alternatives systematically engendered by processes independently identifiable by a culture-free phonetician.

But is there really any such reaching out to another and genuinely explanatory level in the work of latter-day *structuralists*? What one tends to find in them is the seeking out of polarities, extreme contrasts, from within the wealth of ideas found (say) in the myths and legends of a given society, and the listing of the ways in which these combine and recombine with each other. Given the (to my mind gratuitous) assumption that these sensibilities of ours tend to be binary, this leads to the method which could be called a conceptual Bentham of Bounds. It is assumed somehow that a given myth will repeatedly bounce against the very limits of the conceptual space of the society, which we then unmask when we de-code the myth. But is there any kind of genuine explanation of the world of a given culture, if we have run around what seem to be the conceptual extremities of its stories? At best, we have indeed described those bounds, or those that are habitually reached by narrators and listeners in the society; but have we explained them? Elements drawn from one level seem to be explained in terms of themselves.

And there is another related worry. Has anyone ever looked up fifty *structuralist* in non-communicating cables with the same text, and then compared the independent interpretations, to see whether the same polarities, the same bounds, have been identified? Reading *structuralist* texts, one has the uncomfortable feeling not merely that the descriptions them-

selve select their points of reference in an arbitrary manner, or at any rate a number of which the rules are imposed and then followed. A distinguished French literary expert, now in exile in Paris, was heard to remark that he had acquired a new addiction - to develop *structuralism* with a human face.

These are the worries which *structuralism* is liable to inspire. They do not exclude the possibility of interesting *structuralist* work in some spheres; but they do incline one to caution in accepting *structuralism* as some overall revelation in human and social studies.

The latest (Spring 1981) issue of *Idology & Consciousness*, "Power and Desire, diagrams of the social", carries a full translation (by Paul Foss and Paul Patton) of *Idiotism*, a short work by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Two articles on Deleuze and Guattari accompany the text. "The subverting machine" by Colin Gordon, and "Notes for a glossary" by Paul Patton.

Deleuze and Guattari always intended *Rizome*, first published in 1976, to serve as the introduction to volume two of their monumental (1100-page) work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. It duly appears in *Idiotism*, the sequel to *Anti-Oedipus*, but so substantially modified as to warrant treating the 1976 version as an independent work meeting separate translation. It provides a useful introduction to the invariably ingenious - if sometimes extremely wild - joint speculations of Deleuze and Guattari; and, in particular, to their sustained attack on the "tree" model of the structure of scientific enquiry: "form rhizomes and not roots... make a line, never a point... be the Pink Panther, and let your loves be like the wasp and the orchid, the cut and the baboon."

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A Biography of Johann Most  
288pp. Greenwood Press. £14.50.  
0 313 22053 0

The career of Johann Most is evidently an exemplary tale — but what the moral might be is a great deal less clear. His ill-treatment by American judges and juries suggests that the moral is that the land of the free has never had much time for real libertarians; the rise and fall of his influence among European immigrants to America suggests that the moral is that the appeal of anarchism to anyone but the oppressed and alien was never great; the utopian forms of socialism stood little chance against capitalism with a democratic face, and that anarcho-revolutionary communism stood none at all. The simplicity and repetitiveness of Most's doctrines — little more than the cry that inequality was sustained by force and might legitimately be overturned by force, whereafter loosely federated groups would freely negotiate their own futures — suggest that the moral is that the Marxists were quite right to sneer at unscientific socialism. His personal circumstances — he had brutal childhood, was hideously disfigured by botched surgery on a diseased cheek, and was humiliated when his ambition to become an actor was simply mocked — suggest that the moral is that political extremism may indeed be the public expression of personal wounds.

From Frederic Trautmann's account of Most's career, you might draw any or all of these morals. Indeed, from Professor Trautmann's account you might find it difficult to draw any conclusions whatever or even to form a consecutive impression of what Most's career actually was. Even the jacket of the book is infected with the chaotic impression created by Trautmann's brazenly unclear, the jacket remarks that one of Most's stays in jail was the result of his praising the assassination of President McKinley in an editorial in

*Freiheit*, whereas the book itself is at some pains to demonstrate that it was by the sheerest bad luck that Most happened to reprint an article by Karl Heinzen on the virtues of tyrannicide in an issue which appeared on the day of the murder; it is precisely this which makes the behaviour of the police and judiciary so obviously unjust and vindictive.

It is perhaps unkind to complain of Trautmann's offering us an anarchic account of an anarchist's career; he is a professor of speech, not a philosopher, historian or political scientist, and has no doubt tried to give his readers a vivid picture of his hero. And it must be said that we are in his debt for the book there has been no English biography of Most, and Trautmann has done an extremely good job of searching out a controversial literature, written in German and published in America, which is quite unknown to all but a handful of specialists. All the same, it is hard not to feel that a tidier and more consecutive account of what Most did, what he thought and why he thought it would have been a lot more use. After all, what the average curious reader will know about Most is that he was excessively optimistic about the possibilities of dynamite, and that he thought that terrorism against the rich and powerful would bring capitalism crashing down.

The title of his most famous book reinforces the popular impression: *Revolutionäre Kriegswissenschaft: Ein Handbuch zur Anleitung betreffend Gebrauch und Herstellung von Nitroglycerin, Dynamit, Schießbaumwolle, Knallquecksilber, Bomben, Brandseifen, Giften u.s.w.* It is a good Trautmann trying to defend Most against the mockery of Bismarck (who picked up the anarchist's cookbook in the *Reichstag* and simply roared with laughter) by pointing out that you really can kill people by blowing them up. Nobody denies that; what they deny is that terrorism will make a dent in a really determined state, or that what terrorism will achieve will be anarcho-revolution rather than mere repression. What is needed is either some explanation of why, in the context, the fear of terrorism was stronger than it looks, or why the case for terrorism

was less central to this brand of anarchism than the popular impression has it. It is not quite true that Trautmann gives us nothing along these lines, but he gives us nothing systematic.

Most's career would in any event almost defy careful telling. His life was a hand-to-mouth, go-to-god and place-to-place one, with emotional, financial and political disaster never more than a step away. He was born in Augsburg in 1846; he lost his mother at the age of ten and acquired a savage stepmother; among his schoolmasters, one was sufficiently sadistic to be identified as insane; religion and authority became natural targets for ridicule and revolt. At twelve he became an apprentice bookbinder, and at seventeen set out to see if life was better elsewhere. By the time he was twenty-five he had been jailed for high treason in Austria and then exiled. Back in Germany, he alternated between increasingly influential work in the Social Democratic party and periods in prison; the passing of the Anti-Socialist Law in 1878 drove him out of Germany for good. Three years in England was enough to get him jailed for an article applauding the assassination of Alexander II; so in 1882 he left for America, where he lived until his death in 1906.

His fortunes rose and fell with those of the socialist left generally, and his liberty was cut short each time there was a Red Scare. After the Haymarket riot in 1887, and after the shooting of McKinley, he was jailed for a year on Blackwell's Island; after Alexander Berkman's attempt on Henry Frick, however, nothing worse befell him than a horse-whipping from Emma Goldman — he and Berkman had both been her levers, but Most had denounced the attempted assassination in *Freiheit*. It was a career which, not surprisingly, was agreed by both enemies and supporters to be extremely "picturesque"; whether it was anything more than that it would need a more orthodox treatment than Professor Trautmann's to decide. But for lovers of the picturesque — especially in its more Gothic and disordered forms — *The Voice of Terror* will do well enough.

## Crime and recrimination

By Erik de Mauny

ALFRED ERICH SENN:  
Assassination in Switzerland  
The Murder of Vatslav Vorovsky  
219pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £21.50.  
0 299 08530 3

At mid-evening on Ascension Thursday, May 10, 1923, a Soviet counter diplomat called Vatslav Vorovsky was dining with two colleagues at the Hotel Cecil in Lausanne, where he had arrived two weeks earlier to represent the Soviet Government at the Peace Conference on the Near East. The three men were immersed in a lively conversation when a stranger walked over from a nearby table, pulled out a gun, and with a cry of "That's for the Communists!" fired at Vorovsky at point-blank range, killing him instantly. As Vorovsky's companions tried to tackle the assailant, he fired several more shots, wounding them both. He then surrendered his gun to the head waiter, and allowed himself to be led into the hotel lobby, where he waited patiently, even cheerfully, for the police to arrive, telling anyone who would listen that he had fired on the Russians in order to avenge the deaths of his father and his uncle under the Bolshevik regime. He turned out to be an émigré White officer, Arcadius (Arkadi) Polunin, who had given him both moral encouragement and financial help. Polunin had, in fact, been arrested as an accomplice in the murder. But the Soviet authorities suspected that he and Conrad were merely the visible instruments of a much wider conspiracy.

It was thus inevitable that when the trial opened in the Lausanne Court in early November 1923 its

determination to kill a Bolshevik leader.

At any other time, personal vengeance might have seemed a sufficient motive for Conrad's action. But May 1923 was a time of peculiar stress in relations between the Soviet Government and the Western powers. With Lenin incapacitated by a stroke, the Soviet leadership had seemed uncertain of its direction. On the one hand, it was cautiously trying to establish normal relations with Western governments. On the other, it saw recurring spectres of renewed imperialist intervention. It was only two days before the murder of Vorovsky that Lord Curzon had issued his celebrated ultimatum to the Soviet leaders, complaining of various Soviet activities, and threatening to break off relations between the two governments. In Soviet eyes, the murder of Vorovsky looked very much like a sinister new element in an orchestrated campaign against the Soviet regime. The Soviet authorities, including the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Chicherin, were already obsessed with the Swiss Government for failing to give Vorovsky proper accreditation to the Lausanne Conference. It turned out, furthermore, that Conrad had not acted entirely on his own, but through the Russian Red Cross in Geneva, had been in close contact with another émigré White officer, Arcadius (Arkadi) Polunin, who had given him both moral encouragement and financial help. Polunin had, in fact, been arrested as an accomplice in the murder. But the Soviet authorities suspected that he and Conrad were merely the visible instruments of a much wider conspiracy.

It was thus inevitable that when the trial opened in the Lausanne Court in early November 1923 its

criminal origins were soon almost buried beneath a welter of conflicting political claims and charges. The defence understandably made much of the sufferings of Conrad's family during and after the October Revolution, and tried to convert the trial into a general indictment of Bolshevism. On the opposing side, the plaintiff — Vorovsky's wife and daughter, and his two associates, Jan Arena and Maxim Divilkevich — were represented by counsel, including a Soviet lawyer from Moscow, who tried strenuously to paint a picture of a broadly-based anti-Communist movement involving various factions among the White Russian émigrés, with the hacking of the capitalist powers. In the final outcome, the nine-member Swiss jury failed to produce the six votes necessary for conviction, and both defendants were acquitted.

Alfred Erich Senn is an acknowledged authority on Soviet-Swiss relations and on the role of Russian émigrés in Switzerland. The subject of this study is admittedly a footnote in history, and much though Conrad longed to provoke a new anti-Bolshevik campaign, his action in Lausanne remained limited in its consequences. It continued, however, to provoke recriminations between Moscow and the Swiss Confederation for nearly a quarter of a century: it was not until 1946 that the two governments finally agreed to establish diplomatic relations.

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## Paradise rationalized

By Robin Robbins

ANDREW MILNER:

John Milton and the English Revolution  
A Study in the Sociology of Literature  
248pp. Macmillan. £15.  
0 333 27134 3

Cries the stall-reader: "Bless us! A book on Milton spattered with such terms as 'bourgeois' and 'capitalism'! Anathema!" and totters back to the Common Room for a stiffener. His leaving is his loss: a carefully conceived and justified study of the relation of Milton's philosophy, beliefs and values to those predominant in his society, and their influence on and expression through his works. Though Andrew Milner takes as his starting-point the Marxist idea that literary production is dependent on extraliterary realities, and that economic factors play a special role in the determination of the nature of a society, he does nothing so crude as to set up philosophical or sociological criteria, let alone political orthodoxy, as standards of literary worth. He also eschews the vulgar fallacy of regarding literature as a product solely of collective forces: "*Paradise Lost* was, after all, written by John Milton, and not by a select committee of defeated Protestant revolutionaries."

Marx and Engels (and Raymond Williams) are quoted to make clear that from the beginning intelligent Marxists, while denouncing (too sweeping) "the historical idealism characteristic of literary-critical orthodoxy", were not pursuing instead a simplistic economic determinism. Nevertheless, they provided a comprehensive worked-out theory of literature: for this Milner turns to the genetic structuralism of Goldmann in his earlier work, far from (reductively, one may object) "comprehension is the bringing to light of a significant structure immanent in the object studied".

For the sociologist of literature (and, to avoid false expectations, that it must be remembered, not literary scholar or critic, is Andrew Milner's declared function) who sets out to compare the internal structures of literary works with the social structures which he presumes to have given rise to them, Goldmann provides a theory of mediation. Adopting this, Milner looks not for

a direct structural homology between individual works of literature and the nature of social reality, but rather a set of structural homologies between, on the one hand, the individual work of literature and the world vision of the social class in which the writer belongs, and on the other, that world vision and the real social life of the times.

The social class in which Milton belonged Milner defines, unsurprisingly, as the bourgeoisie, and the world vision produced in the era during the revolutionary period as the rationalist one. He sees two stages in its development, one triumphant, as its programme seemed victorious, one problematically embattled, after the failure of the Interregnum. Central to this rationalism was an emphasis on the supremacy of the discrete individual, in religious terms on private interpretation of the Bible. The other rationalist priority was freedom, both external political liberty as sought by the Independents and (what distinguished them and Milton from other radicals such as Ranters and Levellers) internal freedom of reason from dominance by passion, which alone qualified men for external freedom.

Milton's clear espousal of the radical opposition of reason to passion which is fundamental to rationalism is in itself sufficient rebuttal of the sloppy conception of him as some sort of proto-Romantic. More precisely, Milner takes pains to distinguish rationalism, which saw knowledge as internally constructed by the active mind, from the empiricism which in England largely succeeded it and viewed the mind rather as a passive recipient of sense impressions. Not only does Milton

reject feudal deference to authority (even that of the Bible, where it appears incompatible with reason): he puts no faith in "the weak and fallible office of the senses".

For Milner, Milton's philosophical position corresponds to the historical position of his class, defined according to Goldmann: rationalism suits the bourgeois class criticizing feudal dominance and proposing a new order; empiricism suits bourgeois apologetics for the status quo in a dominant bourgeois society. *Comus* is shown to contain, as well as the obvious central opposition of the constant, rational, individual mind to the unstable animal passion, the external conflict in Milton's society. The Lady's proposal for a just distribution of wealth is that of one sort of Puritan revolutionary. Equally clearly, *Comus*'s values are those associated with the Cavaliers (and notably expressed by Carew in "A Rapture"). He is made to represent conservatism in yet another respect: Milner points out that "The *Comus* who stands for 'rites' and 'canon laws' against 'mere moral bubble' speaks the language of Archbishop Laud".

The issue of sexual temperance in *Comus* is, of course, only part of the overall conflict between reason and passion which in turn is only one constituent of Milton's all-embracing rationalist philosophy. Over a decade later, in "I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs", the political aspect is uppermost, with Milton making true liberty conditional upon knowledge of truth, wisdom, and virtue. Milner (justifiably) makes much of Michael's explanation in the last book of *Paradise Lost* of why divine justice permitted Nimrod to inaugurate monarchy.

Yet sometimes nations will decline so low  
From virtue, which is reason, that no  
Ept justice, and hence, hence, hence  
Deprives them of their outward  
liberty.

Their inward loss.  
Thirty years after writing *Comus*, Milner is arguing on a much broader — indeed a cosmic — front that individual men and nations receive what they deserve, and that what they deserve is judged against a scale on which passion ranks lowest, and reason supreme.

In Milton this doctrine of reward and punishment goes far beyond that of traditional Christianity. As Milner points out, Milton is a meritocrat from top to bottom: in Heaven the Son is elevated to the right hand of God "By merit more than birthright"; in Hell Satan is "by merit raised" to the infernal throne. Milton is not a democrat in either a seventeenth-century or a modern sense, and thus, far from his radical independence, not to be identified with the Levellers. Milner's words, "The bourgeois individualism challenges the inegalitarianism per se of feudalism, but rather its non-meritocratic basis". He goes on to point out the inadequacy of "C. S. Lewis's suggestion that the central principles upon which *Paradise Lost* is based are those of obedience and hierarchy". The problem, for the critic, is whether approaching from a socio-political angle or not, is what sort of hierarchy it displays.

Milner attributes the perception that the Fall was not a matter simply of disobedience but essentially "the triumph of passion over reason" to Saurat's study of 1924. It is, of course, as old as St Gregory, followed by standard commentators such as Paterius, and in any case Eve would have been saved from the weakness of her reason by obedience. But Milner's development of this perception does much to explain the coldness, aridity and colourlessness of Milton's God. Extreme Protestant rationalism, expressed in *De Doctrina Christiana*, made the reasoning power of the individual paramount, even over the word of Scripture, and thus the only acknowledged medium of the divine presence in the world. This tended to abolish the separation between man and God essential to the latter's distinct existence. Given the asseveration of

the freedom of the human will in *Paradise Lost*, God, though omniscient, is reduced after his first causation of existence to the role of spectator. The consequence is that in *Paradise Lost* we have not the actively participant, anthropomorphic figure of Genesis — "Rather he is abstract reason itself". (Milner might profitably have seized on the use of the word "if" — extraordinary for an omniscient being — in il. 117.) God the Father turned a school divine is not a recent notion, but Milner seems right to argue that Milton's God, rather than a backward-looking feudal concept, emulating Aquinas while demanding unthinking obedience, is the product of a rationalism which, carried to the end (much further than Milton took it), is atheistic. He is almost rationalized and abstracted out of existence. Whereas other participants in the story, not only Satan, Adam, and Eve, but even angels and lesser devils, are endowed, as one would expect from a writer who is a Protestant individualist (and, what Milton ignores, a successor of Shakespeare), with memorable personality, it is hardly more possible, for doctrinal reasons, for God to exist as a person than it is for Milton's Holy Spirit.

The political historian's approach to *Paradise Regained* produces the thesis that the characteristic tone of the poem is due to fatigue not in the individual poet but in the revolutionary movement. In the three temptations Milner sees Milton as treating of two issues. Having disposed in the first of the expected conflict between reason and passion, he turns in the second with the enticements to liberate God's people and dethrone the libertine ruler, to an assessment of the relative merits of both quietistic and activist responses to political oppression. Milner attributes the victory of quietism here to a depressing recognition of the successful repression of dissent after the Restoration. The third temptation he sees as merely an enactment of the divine supremacy proved in the first two.

Milner's critique of *Samson Agonistes* is, compared to that of his book, pedestrian. Though the drama indisputably advocates political action, the securing of external freedom by one who has recovered his internal freedom, his wisdom and his virtue, the argument that this represents a regaining by Milton of his earlier conviction and rationalist optimism, fostered by the contention of the late 1650s, depends crucially on the date of composition. The dispute over this date is avoided by Milner, except for the unimportant, theoretical and easily disposed-of arguments of R. W. Condon. To assert that "The movement from quietism to activism in English radical thought as a whole clearly suggests a parallel movement in Milton's own thought, and we are thus led to the conclusion that the composition of *Samson Agonistes* must postdate that of both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*" begs large questions. All its persuasive force inheres in the words "suggests" and "must" — no mere force, that is, then in the possible counter-argument that the optimistic activism and triumph over a seemingly disastrous disability fit Milton's circumstances in the 1650s.

Perhaps it is the strain of twisting rationalist materials to fit his thesis that makes Milner lapse into such insupportable assertions as that, tormented, we are told, with "restless thoughts", with reproaches of God, with his present sufferings, and with self-criticism, "Samson appears, then, at the very beginning of the poem, in precisely that pose of repentant obedience and patient quietism which had previously, in *Paradise Regained*, appeared to Milton as the only possible response to the defeat of reason". This is rubbish, betrays ignorance of *Oedipus at Colonus*.

It is perhaps too much to demand that someone who has read much in

politics, sociology and critical theory should possess a wide knowledge of imaginative literature. Yet an awareness of this limitation can be expected, and should have prevented such superficial wrong-headedness as "Who, after all, apart from professional scholars, today reads *L'Allegro* or *Il Penseroso*?" (more common readers, most of us would wager, than tackle *Paradise Regained*); or, in *Samson Agonistes* not being intended for the stage: "Milton no doubt shared in this common Puritan prejudice against the dramatic form" (apart from his admiration of Shakespeare and Jonson, and his writing of *Comus*, if *Samson Agonistes* was written before the Restoration, there were no theatres open to write for; if after, it would hardly have suited the current appetite for heroic extravaganzas and libertine comedy).

It is not only in the primary literature that Milner's reading seems parochial. The literary critics of whom he rather easily disposes (or as easily follows) are for the most part such as appeared on undergraduate reading-lists twenty years ago.

More damaging is a tendency simply to disregard what does not neatly fit the argument. Of Milton's words in the *Defensio*, "if any law or custom be contrary to the law of God, of nature, or of reason, it ought to be looked upon as null and void", Milner asserts "It is not the written law, then, but rather the unwritten law of reason which is paramount": not only orthodox theologians and jurists, but probably Milton himself would have been displeased by the silent telescoping of the law of God and Natural Law into the reason by which they may be known, whatever supremacy as arbitrary is accorded to the last. Later Milner claims that in arguing "God and Nature bid the same" Abdiel asserts "that God and Nature are essentially one": though "on the following page we are reminded that Milton believed in a 'God who is reason, law, and truth'. Agreement among entities is not identity. In fact the confusion of God and Nature is one of *Comus*'s sophistries.

Because Milner is trying to synthesize a world-vision for Milton, he is ready to swallow the rationalization in *Defensio Secundo* of the tracts on divorce, education and censorship as planned parts of a libertarian programme. The historian who sees more than coincidence between historical events and the later poems should surely see more than coincidence between these pamphlets and Milton's marital difficulties, meeting Samuel Hartlib, and troubles with censorship.

For such judicious scepticism we may turn to Christopher Hill's *Milton and the English Revolution*, which, moreover, devotes an appendix to the problematic dating of *Samson Agonistes*. According to Milner, his own work was complete when Hill's appeared in 1977. Consequently, he initiates comparison only in a final fifteen-page note. Here he criticizes Hill's account of the politics of the revolutionary period as curiously independent and more radical allies such as the Levellers. Thus, according to Milner, Hill's "third culture" "collapses into two opposed political groupings which opposed each other (in the debates) at Putney and later (in the Leveller mutiny) at Burford". Milner also accuses Hill of comparing partial aspects of the content of Milton's work with partial aspects of the works of others and of historical events. In contrast, Milner claims to analyse and reconstitute Milton's world vision as a totality.

Nevertheless, even if one does not in the end accept Hill's synthesis, his literary acumen is sharper, his scope far wider, his documentation more thorough than Milner's, so that, albeit by the way, one learns more from the earlier book about the seventeenth-century context of Milton's ideas. Milner's narrow sociological and structuralist viewpoint is both a strength and a limitation: while encouraging claims to greater importance than they possess, it does afford clearly defined and thoughtful provoking insights into Milton as thinker and revolutionary, if not as a poet.

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### David Marshall Lang

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## Bar-room bluster

By John Lucas

Kavanagh's Weekly  
A Journal of Literature and Politics  
Goldenhill Press, Marlborough Rd.  
The Curragh, Co. Kildare. £20  
(paperback, £12).  
0 904984 621

Kavanagh's Weekly, the title is something of a misnomer, and not merely because others wrote for it during its brief, thirteen-week life. (They include Myles na gCopaleen.) Shift the apostrophe behind the s and you have a more accurate picture of those responsible for the paper: for its contents and its appearance. In its introduction to the present edition, Peter Kavanagh writes that "Patrick's genius alone illuminates each page". Yet the fact is that it was Peter's money — some £2,000 of it — which made publication possible in the first place, and it was Peter who acted as publisher, and for good measure he wrote many of the 10,000 words necessary for each of the weekly parts, including all the pieces on America, which appeared under the name of John L. Flinnigan. If he is modest about his own role it may be because the *tone* of Kavanagh's

Weekly was largely determined by Patrick. For it is certainly the case that the columns written by Peter exhibit the same kind of parochial in-fighting and range of bar-room insults that characterize Patrick's journalism; and Kavanagh's Weekly is, I think, mostly a matter of tone. One set by such remarks as "Mr Austin Clarke, the reviewer".

Reading through the pages of the Weekly, you can see why it created something of a stir in Dublin when it first appeared. It has about it a school-boyish, nose-thumping humour, and if you happened to be part of the world it thumped away at you might have felt hurt by one of its more accurate blows. But which were they? At this distance it is almost impossible to tell, and to be honest it is not clear why the paper should have been thought worthy of reprinting. For the truth is that by and large Kavanagh's Weekly is poor stuff. It is often badly written — no doubt the need to meet deadlines explains though it does not excuse much of this; and it is stuffed out with the kind of dreary and opinionated nonsense, of which the following is a typical example:

Women are wise in their generation and fit their instincts, but when they abandon their perceiving bodies for their soon dried up

brains they become intolerable. The body with its feelings, its instincts, provides women with a source of wisdom but they lack the analytic detachment to expel [sic] it in literature. The great writer is the man who has in him some of this feminine capacity for perceiving with the body. This femininity, however, is not to be confused with homosexuality though it often looks like a tendency in that direction.

Anyone who listened in on the semi-drunken saloon-bar chat of literary London in the 1950s will be in a good position to recognize that behind such drivel lies the inevitable, slurred appeal to quotations from, among others, Donne ("one might almost say, her body thought") and Baudelaire, (O femme dangereuse, O schismatisée diabolique?), but that does not make it any the less drivel.

Kavanagh's Weekly was perhaps predominantly concerned with Dublin politics. But this is of no great interest unless one can understand such politics in their context. It is a major criticism of this facsimile edition that it provides no unobscured whatsoever, which means that a good deal of the paper's polemic is virtually pointless. To say this is not to deny one can gain an occasional insight into the way in which Patrick

Kavanagh was, or felt himself to be, or was prepared to project himself as, the rogue outsider, totally at odds with those Irish orthodoxes which he saw as standing in the way of his own chance of recognition. In the tenth number, for example, there is an attack on the Irish bourgeoisie, which according to Kavanagh

is the enemy of every fine and enlarging idea. That class has got a tremendous grip on the Twenty-six Countries; in Dublin they operate almost as a secret society; they are interlocked among the directorates of various large societies; touch one and you touch them all.

This bourgeoisie is almost entirely the creation of that noted American, Eamon de Valera. Behind his great black clerical cloak they operate. They have power and they are very charming. They are in a vague way supporters of the Arts. They are afraid of nothing for they know that they have the money and can control all thought by shutting out from the sources of money anyone who might look like exposing them.

There can be no doubt that in that final sentence Kavanagh is thinking

of himself. What one therefore expects is something in the way of exposure, some naming of names. But it never comes. And this is what is finally so disappointing about the paper. It simply isn't precise enough. It lacks a flair for the actual. Leave aside the slap-happy attacks on such sacred cows as De Valera, Parnell and the Church, and more or less all that remains is bluster. Kavanagh's Weekly falls remarkably short of the mark when it comes to the kinds of facts which are the essence of good journalism. Indeed, it is short of any facts. The pieces with most meat on them are those which Peter Kavanagh wrote about the golgotha of the Irish in America, but although they remind one of the fact that Irish-American is an important cultural phenomenon, they none the less seem marginal to what surely ought to have been the paper's main concern: to provide detailed information about political and cultural affairs in Dublin. Unfortunately, Kavanagh's Weekly lacks a sense of detail.

It also lacks good poems. Several of those printed in its pages — either over Patrick Kavanagh's own name or over various pseudonyms — sound like they were written by a schoolboy, but none is among his better work. And that, I am afraid, is true of the Weekly as a whole.

## The poetry of the troubles

By Douglas Dunn

MICHAEL LONGLEY:  
Selected Poems 1963-1980  
63pp. Wake Forest University Press.  
\$5.50.  
0 916390 14 4

Michael Longley's *Selected Poems* is published by a little-known American university press, presumably to introduce his work to American readers. But a British edition would not be a luxury. After all, the way in which a distinguished contemporary poet selects from his first seventeen years of writing is significant for the readers who have been following his work, especially as, in this case, Longley's first three collections are out of print.

Longley's first book, *No Convincing City* (1969), established at once that he was at home with the colloquial and natural as well as with artifice. Interestingly enough, the seven poems reprinted from that book do not include those which, through a refreshing technical accomplishment, recommended themselves at the time — poems like "Epithalamion", "A Personal Statement" and "The Hebrides".

His development suggests a slow riddance of the more noticeable restraints of formalism, an affectionate departure from rhyme and metre rather than a trite rejection of what can be achieved through traditional means. Verse, however, is still the ground on which Longley's writing is founded. In *An Exploded View* (1973), he introduced a new technique, the "Exploded View" (1973), an experience against which poetic technique (let alone imagination) had to contend in ways that to most of us are hardly imaginable. "Wounds" is included, and two of his "Letters to Irish

Poets" (written in epistolary tetrameters). That book was interesting, too, for its portrayal of imaginary landscapes — "Ghost Town", "The Fairground", "The Island" and "Caravan" — the sort of places to which the mind retreats when more immediate subjects are offensively beyond a writer's temperament. Of these only "Caravan" has been selected, while no room has been found for the excellent "Albion".

As a result, a reader already familiar with Longley's work might find his attention re-directed to such poems as "Casualty", which is worth comparing with Derek Mahon's "Matthew 29-30". In Longley's case, an animal cadaver is observed as it is reduced by the elements, until

... something that had followed  
row and row was desperate for  
A last morsel and was  
Other than the wind and rain.

In Mahon's poem, the speaker reduces himself by imaginary surgery until he is at home with the colloquial and natural as well as with artifice. Interestingly enough, the seven poems reprinted from that book do not include those which, through a refreshing technical accomplishment, recommended themselves at the time — poems like "Epithalamion", "A Personal Statement" and "The Hebrides".

A comparison of what Longley has chosen to reprint with one's own expectations provokes an appreciation of his remarkable consistency. It is that level of competence — I do not remember reading a poem by Longley which was noticeably bad — which has led some readers to think of his work as unexciting and others to welcome it as exemplary for the clearness of its imagery: what some see as his originality, others, no doubt, have seen as mere banality. (Admittedly, his third book, *Man Lying on a Wall*

(1976), was, if not a disappointment, then concerned with new subjects and techniques than one might have hoped.) Longley's poetry is impressive for its skill, its cadence, and the naturalness of the voice speaking within it. It is to his misfortune that a writer's task to exert their full mystery: he is the sort of writer whose work is easily undervalued. An imaginative, sensuously compassionate poet, he is at his best when his experience of nature blends into and nourishes his equally vivid sense of love and death, as in "Mayo" or "Obsequies". Wisely, he has reprinted his domestic poem "Company", but not, unfortunately, "Ars Poetica" or "The Swin", both of which are equally good.

As a nature poet, Longley is as much fascinated by botany as by animals, and his *Selected Poems* offers at least a sample of this. A poem like "The Linen Workers" testifies to his status as a poet whose Irish commitments are at the service of place and nature, love and art. It may be these which equip him to write moving human elegies. His compassion and clear narrative line are both wonderfully effective in "Mayo Monologues" (from his recent book *The Echo Gate*). Three new poems close the book: "Patchwork", "The Third Light" and "The White Butterfly". The first and third of these, like many others of Longley's poems (for example, "The Linen Industry") are discreetly feminine but far from effeminate. Longley is one of the few poets writing who has had the candour to draw extensively from the arena of his writing — which is important enough — it is that release into gentleness and into an affection which seems bewildered but always benevolent, always strange, always at an imagined angle to reality, that makes his work a crucial and instructive part of our contemporary poetry.

## Red branch sagas

By Patricia Craig

MARIA TYMOCZKO (translator):  
Two Death Tales from the Ulster Cycle  
The Death of Cu Roi and the Death of Cu Chulainn  
110pp. The Dolmen Press. £8.50.  
0 85105 342 4

It is just over a century since Standish O'Grady "discovered" Cuchulainn. His prose adaptation of stories from the Red Branch saga is almost the equal of Macpherson's *Osian* as an example of the process of travestying original material. Sir Samuel Ferguson got a bit closer to the Old Irish spirit, but not much: his Cuchulainn is a fine Victorian embodiment of knightly virtues — "of fixed obedience, discipline, and patience. / Heroic courage, and protecting valour." Yeats, who admired Ferguson, soon produced his own version of the Red Branch hero (a more dignified and subtle one): "now the war-rage in Cuchulainn woke". By the beginning of the present century, prose retellings of the Ulster tales — among them those by Douglas Hyde and T. W. Rolleston — had begun to proliferate.

There were fewer attempts at literal translation. (Whitley Stokes, as Maria Tymoczko has translated excerpts from *The Death of Cu Chulainn* into English, and later contributed to a translation into French of the prose sections from that tale, as well as pieces of the poetry.) The difficulties facing scholars were enormous. The Red Branch cycle goes back to the Old Irish period (the sixth to twelfth centuries), and exists in two main versions: one Old Irish, the other recast in Middle Irish. The passages were passed on by copyists who often did not understand the forms in them, or worse yet, thought they did, and "crochized" the spellings. Maria Tymoczko says in her introduction, "As a consequence the texts are rife with obscurities and ambiguities. Errors piled up and were perpetuated. In some cases it is doubtful whether the tales have survived in their entirety. Of those 'whose structure remained unchanged later', Patrick Power wrote in *A Literary History of Ireland*, "all tend to taper off after an impressive beginning and often end in a jumble of half-sentences and notes." He attributes this, not improbably, to growing weariness on the part of the storyteller and the scribe.

Maria Tymoczko has undertaken the translation of two "death tales", *The Death of Cu Roi* and *The Death of Cu Chulainn*. The tales are set in the twelfth-century *Yellow Book of Lecan*, partly, she says, to supplement Thomas Kinsella's selection in *The Tain* (1969), and also to correct the common view of Cuchulainn as a hero without blemish. (*Cuchulainn* is the usual anglicized form of *Cú Chulainn*, two words. The tales are linked; Cuchulainn is responsible for the death of Cu Roi Mac Daíra, and, in turn, is despatched by Cu Roi's son Lugaid. Each killing is accomplished in the midst of ritual acts, magic, the breaking of taboos and elaborate portents. As an unenchanted commentator (Magnus MacLean) remarked sternly in 1902, "The Celtic imagination has here full play, untrammelled by the limitations of physical science and modern thought".

Head-hunting was the sport of these Iron Age warriors: a bloody business. "While they were butchering each other around the hillfort, Cuchulainn, sheared off his head and set fire to the fort," we read in Maria Tymoczko's version. Cuchulainn's prowess is formidable: "He split forty breasts and one hundred skulls." We're reminded of the later Gaelic poems of abundance in the list of Cuchulainn's fearsome deeds and in Fercharne's "Eulogy of Cu Roi".

Cu Roi granted me  
Ten holdings  
Of Daíra's sons  
Ten slave-women  
Ten golden bridles  
Ten noble horses  
Ten bordered garments  
Ten cauldrons . . .

There are bound to be many failures. Alice's best friend is Cecilia Cullen, for whom there is not much hope, as she is hunchbacked. Cecilia is passionately fond of Alice, and the intensity of this affection had given rise to conjecturing. Then there is May Gould, short and plump, the sexy one of the group; in her "rolling roundness of every part of the body" she definitely announced a want of fixed principle, and a somewhat gross and sensual temperament. And so it proves. May ends the season having landed not a husband but an unwanted baby. Students of costume may be interested to note that May wears "shammy-leather drawers" to keep her warm under her ball dress. (How far is Moore's "realism" to be trusted? Is her Jaburum blooming in August, which it doesn't, even in Ireland.)

Lastly there is Violet Scully, elegant and composed, whose "almost complete want of osom" gave her the appearance of a convalescent boy. Yet it is she who snatches the match of the season, weedy Lord Kilmearney, from pretty Olivia Barton.

But that is for the dénouement. The meat of the book concerns the ludicrous but deadly serious rituals of the Dublin season, for which the girls and their mothers stay at the Shelbourne Hotel. At the dress-maker's (Moore describes stuffs and styles in litany of purplish, Paterish prose) rivals deciding on ball gowns pass on the stairs with false smiles. At the Drawing-room at Dublin Castle, where they are presented to the Viceroys, the girls are herded like lovely sweating beasts, described in terms of variegated roses all dressed in white muslin. The preoccupation is their holiest moment, approaching His Excellency, the girls experience "the nerve-racking, the systolic emotion of communicants, who when the bell rings, approach the altar rails to receive God within their mouths".

"In the great matrimonial stakes women have to hunt in packs: At the death they may fight among themselves, and the slayer will carry off the prey." These gatherings — elaborately composed by Moore with great

## Launching on the marriage market

By Victoria Glendinning

GEORGE MOORE:  
A Drama in Muslin  
A Realistic Novel  
With an Introduction by A. Norman Jeffares  
329pp. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe.  
£9.50 (paperback, £3.25).  
0 86140 055 0

This review will not be without bias. *A Drama in Muslin* is one of my favourite novels. It was first published in 1886, when George Moore was in his early thirties; in 1915 it revised and shortened it, and it reappeared as *Muslin*. Subtitled "A Realistic Novel", it is the story of five girls from Co. Galway who leave school at the same time, and of how each fares on being launched into Dublin society.

Their object is to get married. Alice Barton, the heroine, who is clever, glib, but not very pretty, looks at her country neighbours, the three fading Misses Brennan, and reflects that "There is a reason for the existence of a parkhouse, but none for that of an unmarried woman." Yet the blatant social scheming appals her as much as the "white death" of spinsterhood. "Give me a mission to perform, and I will live. . . . But oh! save me from this grey dream of idleness."

Her younger sister Olive has no such scruples; blonde, exquisite and empty, "in that beautiful framework of nothing was waiting but a mind". Their mother is equally silly — and platonic, and shrewd, flapping her dainty white hands at lords and instructing her daughters: "A woman is absolutely nothing without a husband; if she does not want to pass for a failure she must get a husband: and upon this all her ideas must be set."

There are bound to be many failures. Alice's best friend is Cecilia Cullen, for whom there is not much hope, as she is hunchbacked. Cecilia is passionately fond of Alice, and the intensity of this affection had given rise to conjecturing. Then there is May Gould, short and plump, the sexy one of the group; in her "rolling roundness of every part of the body" she definitely announced a want of fixed principle, and a somewhat gross and sensual temperament. And so it proves. May ends the season having landed not a husband but an unwanted baby. Students of costume may be interested to note that May wears "shammy-leather drawers" to keep her warm under her ball dress. (How far is Moore's "realism" to be trusted? Is her Jaburum blooming in August, which it doesn't, even in Ireland.)

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"In the great matrimonial stakes women have to hunt in packs: At the death they may fight among themselves, and the slayer will carry off the prey." These gatherings — elaborately composed by Moore with great

verve and precision of vocabulary — are the major set-pieces of the novel. There are dinners, and a Castle hall, where the girls hang about the doorways, "their eyes liquid with invitation" to catch men's attention. For if they are not asked to dance they will wait in shuffling ranks around the walls, and if they do not extort a proposal, they will go back to their country houses for another boring, empty year, only to be brought on to the market again the next season, older and less liquid-eyed.

Moore makes all this very funny, and degrading, and dreadful. The effect on the mentality of some of the girls is made manifest when Lord Kilmearney, besotted with desire, proposes to skinny Violet Scully. He thinks of "the long years of happiness" with his beloved that lie ahead: she "of how grand it would be to be a mercenary, of her triumph over the other girls".

While the girls "dream unflinchingly of their white dresses", Moore weaves in another, parallel story: the story of the grumbling unrest and Land League activities that were dividing the country. Clever Alice Barton, watching the sullen pendency, "had already begun to see something wrong in each big house being surrounded by a hundred small ones, all working to keep it in sloth and luxury". Now there were threats, murders, rumours of murders: "An entire race, a whole entire, saw themselves driven out of their soft, warm couches of idleness, and forced into the struggle for life."

The two themes — the marriage market and the land war — are united in a cross-cut sequence in which Mrs Barton, within the house, explains to an enamoured officer that he cannot possibly marry Olive unless he can settle £1000 a year on her; while, outside, her ineffectual husband is wrangling with angry tenants over rents. Later Mrs Barton reaches the important point where, desperate to secure Lord Kilmearney for Olive, and knowing that he is in financial trouble, she offers the little marquis £20,000 if he will marry her daughter. But he prefers Miss Scully, and Olive, undisputed belle of the season, fails to nail a man. But some of the girls, like the peasants, are ready to revolt against the system.

Alice makes friends in the Shelbourne drawing-room with an English writer, Mr Harding, who encourages her to use her mind and earn her living by writing. Prethinking Harding, like a Shavian hero, carries the author's messages. He tells Alice that "a nation cannot be republican so long as it is Christian. Republicanism is common sense, Christianity is faith, and faith is the power of believing what is not true." It was his firm belief, he told her, that both Protestantism and Catholicism were doomed, that "in fifty — say a hundred — years priests and parsons, in common with other fortune-tellers,

will be prosecuted under the Vagrancy Act". This story is set in 1881-82. The hundred years are up.

Poor deformed Cecilia, disturbed and disgusted by Alice's winchment first to Harding and then to the worthy doctor to whom she finally makes a happy marriage, sinks deeper and deeper into what Moore depicts as the hysteria of repressed sexuality, and rants at Alice for pangs. In the end she announces that she will become a Roman Catholic and take the veil: for she had been the only Protestant among them.

This is important. The other girls, and their families and friends, were not the Ascendancy: they were prosperous Roman Catholics, part of a parallel universe with its parallel hierarchies of peers, bishops, and justices. Dublin Castle with its English Viceroy and its English values was the focus for socially aspiring Catholics — "Castle Catholics" — since there was no other centre to aspire to. The girls in this book were once educated in England; but Violet Scully's mother had served in a grocer's shop in Galway town. The number of Catholic peers was limited: dinner parties had to be made up by such as Mr Ryan and Mr Lynch, who had bought and inherited noble manners and who were not to be accepted as suitors unless all else failed.

At Mass, the middle-class Catholics sat apart from the peasants, fingering their gilded missals, watching what Alice saw as the "by-play with the wine and water, the numbing of the uplifted hands", and averting their eyes and noses from the howling, shambling crowd of people in the body of the church. But an unacknowledged social ambivalence was added strain on the girls: the shamless, shameless hug for husbands and social standing. Moore had no opinion at all of this society: "We are in a land of echoes and shadows. Smirking, pretending, grimacing, the poor shades go by . . ."

Norman Jeffares in his introduction says that *A Drama in Muslin* is "ostensibly about education", which is an inadequate, even a misleading statement. "But it is much more than that. . . . In this novel Moore is portraying his native country in the period of the Land League. Professor Jeffares is at pains to make clear the political background and to relate it to the Moore's own situation as landlords in Co. Sligo, at the expense of perhaps of the other side of the novel's equation — the outspoken and cheerfully blasphemous condemnation of middle-class social, sexual and religious attitudes, which must have startled the readers of the *Court and Society Review* in which it first appeared. Jeffares himself points out, without drawing much substance from it, that Moore said the theme of *A Drama in Muslin* was

the same as that of *A Doll's House*.

Moore also said, in *Hall and Farewell*, that Alice Barton was "a preparatory study, a provision of the personal conscience striving against the communal". *Muslin* has other literary relations too, outside its own work. Alice Barton reminds one of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, and her pretty sister Olive of Rosamund Vincy in the same book (Moore had read *Middlemarch* with delight in his early teens, he says in *Conversations in Ebury Street*). Alice Barton is also like one of Jane Austen's sharp heroines — Elizabeth Bennet, for example — and the five husband-hunting girls in *Pride and Prejudice* paralleled the five in *Muslin* (Mrs Barton is a finer-grained Mrs Bennet). And the precise formula of *Muslin* — a group of former school-friends coping variously with the adult world — was rediscovered by Mary McCarthy for *The Group*.

The fate of the "poor muslin martyrs" is at the heart of this novel. The most explicit and effective feminist fiction, at the time when it was most needed, was by men: Gissing, Meredith, Shaw, and Moore. Moore perhaps could empathize with women, because he was himself womanish — he referred in his 1915 preface to *Muslin* to his own "sloping shoulders and female hands" — but this is not the whole point. When a woman writes about women's experiences she writes, in essence, "I feel . . .": she feels only herself, she is the centre of her universe. A man can't join her there but he can see her from outside, in a context that is real and rational for him as it is not for her. (It is the difference between his "landscape with flags" and her "figures, in a landscape".) As Susan Mitchell wrote in her small, spooky book on George Moore published in 1975: "Women know instinctively all [Moore] knows about love and more also. It is intellect we are after. The intellect he brings to bear upon love we wash out of his novels as carefully as the miner washes the gold from the clay."

One such nugget from *A Drama in Muslin* is a passage relating to Alice's attachment to Mr Harding. "In no century," Moore writes, "have men been loved so implicitly by women as in the nineteenth." But this is not merely owing to the "natural wants of love" and the necessity to get married: "there are psychological reasons that today more than ever impel women to shrink from the intellectual monotony of their sex" and to seek out intelligent male society. "For as the gates of the harem are broken down, and the gloom of the female mind and the sensual ideas of modern life" a woman sees in a man "the incarnation of the freedom of which she is vaguely conscious and which she is perceptibly acquiring".

This, says Moore, is the main current; but there is also (as in Irish politics) "an undercurrent of hatred and revolt". Some women, in their realization of "the abasement their sex have been in the past, and are still being in the present, subjected to", reject love — "in the sense of sexual intercourse" — in passionate disgust, like Cecilia in this novel. "Thus Cecilia and Alice, in their different ways, claim Moore, as 'eminently representative' of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In questions of class, of politics and of sex, it is for Moore a case of 'beat them or join them' — a choice that obtains, some might think, in the last quarter of the twentieth century as of the nineteenth.

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Chief Secretary, but would "the Irish Unionist Pigs, the predestined pig in Ireland, who starved for ten years, willingly stand aside without even a foot in the trough". If only Bulgaria and Romania would come along things might huzz a bit. He expected Winston to go to the Front and get killed. He would most certainly have to leave the Admiralty.

In the coalition government when it came the Liberals had twelve posts, the Unionists eight, Labour one, and Kitchener of Kilmorock retained the Secretaryship of State for War. The Irish Party had been urged to join, but Redmond, with Dillon fully sharing his point of view, resisted all pressure to do so. The sharing of power was seen to work, however, to the detriment of the Irish nationalists. Carson became Attorney General, despite their protestations, and "the worst of the case", as Birrell explained, is that a coalition or Union of Forces can only proceed on the basis that it is one all through. I made out my case for special treatment for Ireland on grounds of the highest reason, and made it perfectly plain that I would not consent for a moment to share the daily life of Irish Administration with the Unionist gang-faction-party, call it what you will. On this there was a fight with the result, as I now gather from the P.M., that [James] Campbell alone has effected a judgment [to let the Irish Lord Chancellor]. Even yet the P.M. does not properly grasp the position of an Irish Lord Chancellor but he has, I hope, succeeded in making it clear to the other side (not the Unionists) that there is to be no interference in the Irish Administration. So there it stands. I cannot tell you how I long to be out of it. I can't bear the idea of physical contact in No. 10 Downing Street with those fellows.

Two months later he was telling Dillon that the more he saw of the coalition the more he hated it. "It is being condemned to live in Hell, with the door wide open through which at any moment you can make your escape. I sometimes find myself wishing that all the damned wire-pullers and intriguers who are plotting for the P.M.'s fall might, at least momentarily, succeed and scuttle the ship." "Meanwhile the War continues a haunting horror", and he was afraid Warsaw would fall. "We must carry the Dardanelles", he insisted, "but it is the most terrific enterprise the human race ever attempted."

What might seem to have been relatively minor Irish distractions appeared all the time in the letters. Birrell notes, for example, that "the Gaelic League split was inevitable, but is very melancholy. Poor Dr. Hyde." In an Irish historical context, however, this was an extremely important development. The secret Irish Republican Brotherhood, in its drive towards revolution before the Great War ended, had taken over for its own purpose a great non-political body concerned with the survival of the Irish language, leaving Douglas Hyde, the most influential figure among its founding fathers, with little option but to resign. The ways of Dublin Castle

and the Viceregal Court remained essentially unchanged, however, and Birrell could always see their funny side. From the picturesque village of Adare in the County Limerick to which he went, with the new Lord Lieutenant and his lady in mid-April 1915, he wrote: "Here I am basking in the long delayed sunshine, in the smiles of a sham but genial royalty. The Sinn Féiners, gave their Excellencies a tremendous welcome, and all the [Sinn Féin] suspects hid their heads and held their tongues. The next day the County Council turned up like a great party of undertakers in long black coats and tall hats (or as near thereunto as their wardrobes would permit) and presented addresses - chiefly full of the glories of courting, and drink port and departed in peace. Tomorrow there is to be a garden party on a grand scale - 500 guests at least are expected."

Birrell, in the same letter, then touched on the speedy return of Irish workers from Scotland for fear of being conscripted, the situation in the Balkans, and the pressure from the military for a stronger line with the Sinn Féiners, before turning to the old love of books he shared with Dillon. "There is a good Irish library here - I don't mean in Irish - but about Ireland - histories, biographies, novels, Catholic and Protestant - and well represented." Straying a little, he added "It is a thousand pities Irish Society has broken up; you want all sorts to make a Nation; even T. W. [Russell] and [Horace] Plunkett, [Joe] Devlin and [A.E.] [George Russell]." He ended the letter with a reference to a controversy in which Redmond had scored off Dr. Edward Thomas O'Donnell. "That old Snake, the Bishop of Limerick," he said, "and his devilish cunning performance, playing the Pope and Christianity. Happily behind the Devil was his tail and he stood revealed."

After Adare, Birrell spent some very fine days touring Ireland's regions of beauty, "including one superb Sunday off Slen Head and the Blaskets", but a heavy heart pursued him all the way. Things were continuing to go badly in the war, and the slaughter in the horrible Gallipoli peninsula greatly depressed him. The Ghosts were going down to Hailes before their day in appalling numbers, he said, but he believed somehow that they were on the waning of great events, that the warring balances would ultimately come tumbling down on their sides. As 1915 came to an end there was doubt as to whether Asquith could survive for long as prime minister, and a question mark hung also over the matter of conscription for Ireland. Her exclusion had been carried in the Cabinet, he said, with what he called "unanimity", coupled with a few deep growls, but he took no pleasure in the decision, for though conscription in Ireland was impossible, its omission might be fraught with grave political consequences thereafter. He did not mind what these might be.

The Birrell-Dillon correspondence flagged a bit at the beginning of 1916, but in March, when discipline of a Nationalist (or Redmond) character was relaxed, Birrell was endeavouring to ensure that, for the sake of the future, no stirring of the smoking

embers of political strife would be done by the Unionists, by men like Long and Bulford. "Of course there is a risk", he told Dillon.

and the possibilities of sporadic outrage, Ireland is once more a seething pot, and wherever there is a troublesome [parish] priest or half a dozen curates the Sinn Féiners fling up their cups and become unbearable and locally dangerous. How far [the old Fenian prisoner] T. J. Clarke (who is out on licence but has never observed the conditions of his liberty) is a really dangerous fellow I don't know, but he is the worst. Of course, we ought to have information from within about him and his movements, but we have none. Perhaps we ought to buy an informer. . . I would like to come into collision on good ground and in good cause, with the Irish [Sinn Féin] Volunteers and break their heads. It is very difficult outside Dublin to secure such a rendez-vous, and inside Dublin, it might be too bloody and do harm. . . I don't say [the situation] is all unsatisfactory, but apart from bombs and isolated acts of villainy, engineered by two or three desperate men (who after all may exist in England or on the Clyde), I can't shake off the conviction that, first, there is not much in it, and, second, that it would be made much worse by strong action by the State. . .

That summing-up occurs in the last of Birrell's dated letters in the preserved collection. It displays the mis-calculation on which a rising could in any event have taken place. There was "not much in it" - that is to say, in the fear to which Dillon was no doubt subject, that something serious could happen. He was relying on his instinct, because of real information he had none. Compared with earlier times of which Dillon probably knew more than Birrell, police intelligence was extraordinarily deficient. They had none of the information from within that Birrell signed for, with the result that the choosing of a "cause" and "a ground" was left to the Sinn Féiners, again using that term impressively.

Birrell was right in thinking that T. J. Clarke was a dangerous man, but he was not the only one. He was, however, the first signatory to the proclamation of the Irish Republic with which the Rising began. He was no stranger to Dillon. He had a little acensgriff's stop not far from where Dillon lived in North Great George Street, Dublin, and one or other of Dillon's boys used to buy papers there for their father on the way home from Sunday Mass. However, it would be wrong to think that it was the lack of police intelligence that allowed the Rising to take place. As we said at the very beginning of this article, the arrest of the German arms ship provided the Government with all the justification they needed to crack down on Clarke and his associates. To have done that on Easter Sunday or early on Easter Monday would have pre-empted the blood-spilling about which Birrell was so sensitive. It might also have changed the course of history.

Certainly any Roman would have been astonished to find Britain given pride of place, outweighing not only the Danube provinces but Italy herself, hub of the entire road system. But roads receive very cursory treatment. The diagrams on pages 17, 26 and 68 do not help the reader to appreciate much of the practical technique of building one, and the poor drawing of Roman roads at work barely encourages understanding of the methods of planning employed.

The text is, in fact, a series of brief accounts of how Rome acquired her Empire, a story of war and conquest told many times before but seldom perhaps with so many comments of the type that follows: "Note also, Gentle Reader, that the Burgundians were originally German - not, as I suspect you may have supposed, always the integral part of France" (of Cleopatra). "With Julius Caesar was wholly successful; with Mark Antony he backed the wrong horse, or at any rate the losing horse". Unfortunately these lapses in acceptable literary style are not balanced by profound observations, even when they appear to have been intended. It is true (page 74) that most of Britain's largest towns today - Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool,

## Favourite sites

By Norman Hammond

JAMES DYER:

*The Penguin Guide to Prehistoric England and Wales*  
384pp. Allen Lane. £9.50.  
0 7139 1164 6

In 1973 James Dyer produced *South-east England: An Archaeological Guide*, in which accurate description of sites was married to useful synopsis and citation of the published material on them. He has now stretched himself north and west into less familiar territory, while at the same time restricting himself (more or less) to the period before the Roman conquest. The latter was sensible, since Roger Wilson's *Guide to Roman Remains in Britain* already covers that period more than adequately, and the buildings of the Saxon and medieval periods are dealt with in a variety of publications. The geographical expansion has left marks of strain, however: some counties (such as Suffolk and Cambridgeshire) occupy less than a page each, and West Midlands is down to one paragraph; Wales is fairly fully covered, except for Gwent, which has only six entries. The fullest and best descriptions, as might be expected, are of Mr Dyer's old stamping-ground in the south and south-west of England.

The standard of reference is, at its best, both informative and up-to-date (Roger Mercer's 1980 book on Hambledon Hill is in, for instance), with a thorough combing of the national and county journals for excavation reports; it is a pity, how-

ever, that Dyer has not mentioned the informative journal *Current Archaeology*, which is often several years ahead of the lapidary publications with its brief articles by excavators.

A random sampling of favourite sites yielded some surprises: the Cerne Abbas Giant, for which the earliest certain evidence is mid-seventeenth century, is said to be probably Roman and of the reign of Commodus and perhaps even Iron Age, while the Long Man of Wilmington is also given as "a likely survival from Iron Age times", an opinion Dyer does not share with many archaeologists.

The combination of sketch-maps (including trunk roads but omitting motorways) and precise National Grid references makes any site easy to locate with the aid of an OS map, but some of the descriptions are too laconic either to make the site seem worth visiting or to be of much use if one gets there. The short introduction crams chronology (using calibrated dates) into three pages which span 48,000 years, and admits at only three waves of immigration: in the early Neolithic at about 4,000 BC, around 2,500 BC when beakers and metallurgy arrived, and in the first century AD when the Celtic Belgae settled south-east England. The remaining ten pages examine sites topically, as settlements, fortifications, burial places or ceremonial loci; a short and sensible beginning to a book of, on the whole, short and sensible descriptions. One of the nicest, and shortest, is of Baal House Cave at Creswell Crags in Derbyshire: "excavated using explosives; it produced the bones of hyena, bison and horse".

## Historical systems

By Martin Henig

N. H. H. STWELL:

*Roman Roads of Europe*  
240pp, plus 95 colour plates, seven-figures and nine maps. Cissell.  
£14.95.  
0 304 30075 6

N. H. H. Stowell's book is arranged around a series of nine maps of the Roman Empire which he has drawn and lettered with loving care. One of them shows the extent of the Empire in the second century, five are devoted to the European Western Provinces (Britain, Spain, Gaul, Germany and Italy), one to European Eastern Provinces (under the heading of "Macedonia" and "Asia"), and one to the Roman world (Africa, Egypt and Asia). In one sense the reader should not complain for the title of the volume specifies Europe, but then why do these other (on the whole) much more important areas appear at all?

Certainly any Roman would have been astonished to find Britain given pride of place, outweighing not only the Danube provinces but Italy herself, hub of the entire road system. But roads receive very cursory treatment. The diagrams on pages 17, 26 and 68 do not help the reader to appreciate much of the practical technique of building one, and the poor drawing of Roman roads at work barely encourages understanding of the methods of planning employed.

There are data, such as farm sizes, for which histograms could have been advantageously used in opposition to maps; and the absence of colour in the illustrations is to be regretted, for without it such maps as those showing the distribution of the Irish in America, or Catholics in Ulster, are less immediately comprehensible than they might have been. Perhaps this is matter for a really large-scale volume, illustrating the depth of statistical analysis currently being assembled in the ancillary publications of the *New History of Ireland*, and combining it with an incisive and explicit historical commentary. No one is better qualified than Ruth Dudley Edwards to do it.

Leeds, Newcastle, Bristol - were small or non-existent in Roman times" but the Romans had a better eye for a good site than this statement implies. What about Winchester or Leicester or Exeter? Only the Industrial Revolution changed the geographical factors involved.

The plates are of variable quality and some are wrongly captioned. It is not true that the Great Bath at Bath has been drained and interesting material found beneath it; Barry Cunliffe's excavation was the spring of Sulminerva. The road at Blackstone Edge, Yorkshire, may not be Roman. The temple captioned "the Maison Carrée at Nîmes" is in fact the temple of Livia at Vienna; the guardian lion at the entrance (sic) to the Roman road at Carthage is a marble table-leg, an illusion of garden furniture. And what is a runestone with a Viking boat of the eighth century AD or a black figure vase with a Greek warship of the sixth century AD doing in this book?

The bibliography is as inconsistent as the rest of the work; ranging from learned articles in German to outdated, popular books in English. It shows wide reading but little attempt at critical selectivity. If, as the bibliography implies, any sort of serious research was envisaged, there should at least have been references in the text to ancient authorities on history and geography. Given his undoubted cartographic skills, it would be sad if Nigel Stowell did not have another attempt at a survey of this kind. A book on the topography of Ancient Europe is badly needed.

Colin Speakman has assembled *A Yorkshire Dales Anthology* (223pp. Robert Hale. £8.95. 0 7091 8925 7) from the works of writers on the Pennine districts of Yorkshire. The extracts, both verse and prose, are grouped in sections entitled "The Railway Age", "The Local Community" and "The Landscape of Our Dreams". Drayton, Camden and De la Motte were among the first to note the beauties of the area during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and were succeeded by Gray, the Wordsworths, and others who found in the dramatic landscapes of the Dales the qualities of awfulness and sublimity in Nature sought by the Romantics.

## Guiding the German economy

By Harold James

W. J. MOMMSEN (Editor):

*The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany*  
1850-1950

433pp. Croom Helm. £12.95.  
0 7099 1710 4

DAVID ABRAHAM:

*The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis*

366pp. Princeton University Press.  
£18.40 (paperback, £7.70).  
0 691 19355 3

KARL HARDACK:

*The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century*

235pp. University of California Press.  
£15.50 (hardback, £7.70).  
0 520 13809 1

DAVID CHILDS and JEFFREY JOHNSON:

*West Germany: Politics and Society*  
233pp. Croom Helm. £10.95 (paperback, £5.95).  
0 7099 10701 X

There is, as every schoolboy knows in this historical age, an uneasy relationship between the German past and present, and this is as true of economic as of political history. Since Germany is held to have followed a peculiar and separate path to modernity, Germans and foreign observers ask themselves how much the Bundesrepublik owes to past peculiarity, and whether there is any relation between the storminess of the German past and the postwar "Wirtschaftswunder", which has produced, according to the SPD's election slogan of 1976, a "Modell Deutschland".

One starting-point for examining what is specifically German in all this is the history of the German welfare state. This is the story of the "German Miracle" of which no one needs to feel ashamed. In the immediate aftermath of the defeat of Hitler, Konrad Adenauer could say proudly: "We must hold on to this social insurance. We are proud of it. And as for the proposals that Beveridge has recently made in Hamburg, I can only say that we Germans have already had such things these past thirty years."

H.-G. Hockerts in Wolfgang Mommsen's interesting collection of essays, emphasizes how the Bonn Republic looked self-consciously back to Bismarck's social legislation; and J. Tauschke shows how state paternalism antedated even Bismarck. Social legislation was of great political importance because the state had an obvious artificiality and used social welfare policies to make itself look more naturally legitimate. Bismarck's Reich of 1871 appeared as insecure initially as the Weimar and Bonn republics did later.

The British were suspicious of Germany: P. Henckes shows how, although the Liberal reforms of 1911 were preceded by numerous study trips to Germany, Lloyd George in the end was widely supported in rejecting the German system of over-bureaucratized and inflexible social legislation. Nevertheless, British developments produced eventually a system not unlike the German one: after the Second World War the Germans introduced a fully universal insurance principle, while in this country the Wilson government later modified the scale of benefits to correlate them with contributions, thus adopting the old German principle of which Adenauer had been so proud. At the end of the Mommsen collection, social scientists offer general comments on the welfare state which indicate the scope of the consensus in modern Europe; all paths seem to have led to the same destination. P. Flora is slightly unhappy to find himself there: modern social legislation has acted as a crisis generator instead of solving crises in the Bismarckian manner. K. Deutsch in a rather silly little piece believes the welfare state will only work if it is extended into an international welfare community which devotes the sums now spent on the arms race to a new kind of aid race.

The most stimulating essays in the collection set the question of social policy into an overall economic context. From this perspective the articles on the interwar years are most revealing, as this was the period when some analysts argued that a new and generous welfare policy could smooth out the imperfections of the economic cycle. Public clarity might produce public prosperity. At the same time others argued that the cost of insurance against unemployment and for pensions was too high and was placing a drag on economic performance. So there was a highly political debate as it was realized that the kind of welfare policy pursued would dictate the kind of economic development, and that this in turn would create the political climate. The alternatives were to model welfare in order to encourage universal consumption or to enforce universal austerity for some future and greater good.

Weisbrod and Wollschlaeger describe the attacks made on German welfare policy as the depression began; while in a fascinating essay Robert Skidelsky claims that both the British Treasury and Keynes ignored the structural realities of the 1930s economy. The civil servants had accepted a watered-down Keynesianism: Skidelsky implies that they should have concentrated much more on encouraging dynamic industries through public investment. Planning, rather than welfare policy was required; they were in the same thing since planning would help the strong rather than the weak, but it was difficult for governments to look to the 1930s (as it is indeed now) to pick out the winners in the economic race.

David Abraham's book examines the connections between social and economic policy by analysing the relations between the dominant social groups in inter-war Germany in terms of a contest between economic losers and winners. The book is intended as a contribution to a theoretical debate on the social foundations of democracy: Weimar democracy could have worked, Abraham suggests, if export industries had been able to lead a bloc of industry and capitalists - peasants appealing for support to small shopkeepers and white-collar workers. Instead, although they were "hegemonic" between 1925 and 1930, they failed to maintain the grip on power they had established during the Stressemann years, since the peasants agreed with the large estate-owners of the East that the state's policy was creating an agricultural crisis.

By 1930, according to Abraham, the heavy industrialists, with their much more old-fashioned views on labour relations, were back in the saddle, and obtained the support of the agricultural East. The peasants were hostile to the state's tariff policy which put up the price of their animal feedstuffs; while the big industrialists could no longer hope for voting support and gave up working through political parties. In May 1932, these men helped the estate owners to overthrow Brüning's presidential dictatorship and to set up instead a regime under Papen as Reich Chancellor which had practically no support in the Reichstag. Papen's unstable government was followed by that of General Schleicher, who was repugnant to industry because he wanted to expand employment with support from organized labour. In 1933 Hitler's government opened the way for a continuation of the experiments of the Papen period at the same time as it excluded organized labour from the political process.

In developing his argument, Abraham conducts a certain polemic against those who follow Charles Maier in seeing the Weimar Republic as a corporatist state capable of reconciling competing interests; if this were so, Abraham retorts, how did Nazism establish itself? Brüning certainly admired Mussolini's corporatism, but he was unable to imitate it: he could not construct any kind of mass following in which, though heavy industry and the exporters disagreed about trade policy, they could be brought together in opposition to the inflated share of the national income which went on wages. Real hourly earnings rose until 1931 and wages formed a high proportion of the costs bill for industry (higher for the older industries). While the SPD, as the repre-

sentative of labour, stood in the way of any drastic cut in wages, the Nazis seemed to promise more as, although they called themselves the National Socialist German Workers' Party, they were rather obviously something more than an economic pressure group. Guebbels raised industrial hopes by saying that "wage cuts for the sake of reparations and the current system are unacceptable, but in a national system they would be acceptable."

Abraham comes close to Skidelsky in his criticisms of the SPD's economic proposals, though he tackles the problem from a different angle. Neither the concept of economic democracy (set out in the years of stabilization), nor that of increased consumption as a result of public works (set out in the Depression), had, he claims, any emotional appeal. He might have added that neither proposal included the objective of directing the course of economic development. Investment planning might have been better - but there was an adequate political apparatus in the Weimar Republic for carrying this through. In the 1930s state regulation did lead to a sort of direction of investment, but it was very crude.

Abraham starts from an avowedly Marxist position and indeed his sharp division between the coal and steel industries on the one hand and manufacturing industry (chemicals, textiles, machine tools, electrical goods and, in Abraham's account, brown coal and glass) on the other is familiar from the East German literature, though there it is drawn more subtly. His argument that one sector was more progressive politically and economically depends on some rather questionable manipulation of the figures: the contrast between the first expansion of the dynamic fraction of German industry in the 1920s, as a result of the inflow of American money, and the stagnation of heavy industry is made with production indexes using 1913 as their base-year. If these are recalculated to 1925, the picture is very different: the dynamic fraction of the economy prospers, while heavy industry disappears altogether and only the chemical industry looks significantly "better" than hard coal or steel. The rapid growth of these "newer" industries took place in other words before the period that Abraham is considering - during the war and the years of subsequent inflation. Again, his own tables show that wages formed a higher proportion of costs in the metal finishing and even in the electro-technical industries than in the modernized iron and steel plants.

Cultural and ideological explanations need to be found for entrepreneurial mentalities within firms there were, and this is hardly surprising, differences about the correct economic policy to pursue; and export industrialists as well as steel men soaked up anti-labour ideologies.

Abraham is aware that this makes it difficult to formulate any general model, and his consequent unease in dealing with day-to-day political events leads to occasional factual inaccuracies and some unhelpfully opaque prose: "the important question is not how 'fascist' was industry, nor how intimately involved were its leaders in the backstage events leading to Hitler's appointment. The bourgeoisie saw no other way out of the crisis; it decided 'consciously', in favour of the Nazis."

The trouble is that during the Depression all kinds of conflict broke out, and the central institutions charged with representing sectional interests were helpless. Among Abraham's "frictions", the Bavarians complained about Saxon advantages and vice versa; small producers protested against the big ones; those with access to Russian orders were attacked by those producing for the French markets. People who had been trained to complain now did so in a deafening crescendo, as there was more to complain about. In the resultant cacophony it did matter whose vocal apparatus was nearest to the ear-trumpet of the decaying Field Marshal, in the Reich President's palace.

Karl Hardack's book is more limited in its aims than Abraham's and as a result more successful in fulfilling them. *The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century* was published in Germany in 1976, it provides an apparently less ideologically

committed alternative to the two existing textbooks on twentieth-century German economic history: the liberal one of Giselav Stolper (with additional chapters by Karl Häusser and Knut Borchardt), which concludes a polemic against state planning, and the Marxist one of Hans Mommsen (with Walter Becker and Alfred Schröter), which describes the annihilation resulting from unplanned monopolization. Hardack's version is somewhat nationalistic, a bitterly critical of American lenders in the 1920s, and sympathetic to some of the results of Nazi economic planning.

Most of the book is devoted to the years after 1945, and it ends with the failure of centralized planning in the Democratic Republic and the beginning of systematic (and fairly centralized) planning in the Federal Republic. The last pages describe the 1967 "Law for Promoting Stability and Growth in the Economy", which represented one of the most ambitious legislative embodiments of the principle of a guided economy in the western world. It is unfortunate that this 1981 English edition could not have been up-dated to bring out the lesson of the 1970s, that stability and growth are not easily compatible; the West German economy shrank by 2.5 per cent in 1975 and grew by a spectacular 5.3 per cent in the election year of 1976. Some of

the traditional problems of economic and political life remain unsolved by Karl Schiller's 1967 Law: there are still conflicts over regional policy and between demands for monetary stability and attempts to regulate the labour market. It is interesting to speculate about the kind of political mechanism needed to deal with disputes such as these, but it is happily clear that no David Abraham in the future will be able to write a book on the failure of the Bonn government.

David Childs and Jeffrey Johnson are not equipped with Abraham's sophistication, though they are, so they say in the Preface to *West Germany: Politics and Society*, "fascinated by the re-emergence of this dynamic neighbour", even if they express doubts about its stability. Their work is intended as an up-to-date textbook and its strength lies in the quantity of information it provides. It also has some avoidable weaknesses. The results of the 1980 elections are banished to the obscurity of the Chronological Table and there is no account of the number of seats won by the various parties in the Bundestag. Secondly, at a time when in Britain we are worried about our own electoral system, it is sad that a textbook on West Germany should describe the Federal Republic's proportional representation system incorrectly.

Information, please

by those who knew him well, which is entering its final pre-publication stage. I would like to hear from anybody who knows of any items not cited in the bibliography of my *Water Pater: The Critical Heritage* (1980).

Robert M. Seiler, Department of English, The University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4.

Terence Smith, co-editor of *Writing* (1947-52), plays (under his own name, and occasionally as Terence MacGill) and Dublin character, born 1911. I would appreciate he from anyone who has known him and/or could give any information his fate since spring 1974.

Martin Koon, Bosplatt 28, 025 AT Amstel

Wyndham Lewis: for a new, illustrated edition of his travel book on Morocco, *Filibusters in Barbary* (1932), any information on present whereabouts of drawings Lewis did during his Moroccan trip.

C. J. Fox, 2 Camac Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW2 6NX.

Walter Pater (1839-94): for an edition of recollections and tributes



The German statesman Friedrich Ebert, by George Grosz, c 1923; one of a magnificent collection of modern works reproduced in the catalogue to Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum (see also the picture and caption on page 864 for details, and the picture on the cover of this issue).

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## Speech of figures

By Roy Foster

RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS:

*An Atlas of Irish History*  
Second edition.  
286pp. Methuen. £8.50.  
(paperback, £3.95).  
0 416 74820 1

Topography and cartography act as guides to Irish history in a way not always provided by literary narrative. This is demonstrated not only by W. A. McCutcheon's monumental *Irish and Scottish Archaeology of Northern Ireland* and J. H. Andrews's study of the Ordnance Survey, but also, on a different level, by Brian Friel's masterly play *Translations* (at the Lyttelton Theatre from August 26, reviewed in the TLS on October 26, 1980). The first edition of Ruth Dudley Edwards's *Atlas of Irish History* in 1973 was innovative and compre-

hensive, delivering some surprising and sophisticated emphases in a format which was adapted for use at all levels of education; it rapidly became an indispensable textbook, not least because of the novel angle from which it approached the evidence. A new edition is nonetheless to be welcomed, adding as it does much that has shifted in emphasis over the last eight years, notably the reversal in emigration trends and the shift towards a predominantly youthful population.

To W. H. Bromage's excellent original maps have been added new figures by Neil Hyslop. The political diagrams are also able to utilize three additional sets of election statistics for the Republic and the third edition will, on the current showing, no doubt have access to many more. There is new material on Ireland in the EEC and on the status and employment patterns of women, including a significant table showing the proportion of female Dail members who have sat there as "relatives

of a dead T.D. or patriot". Two new sections on "The Anglo-Irish War" and "The Civil War" reflect developments in historiography since the first edition; the section on Northern Ireland, also expanded, is judiciously balanced and deliberately low-key; here above all figures speak louder than words.

There are data, such as farm sizes, for which histograms could have been advantageously used in opposition to maps; and the absence of colour in the illustrations is to be regretted, for without it such maps as those showing the distribution of the Irish in America, or Catholics in Ulster, are less immediately comprehensible than they might have been. Perhaps this is matter for a really large-scale volume, illustrating the depth of statistical analysis currently being assembled in the ancillary publications of the *New History of Ireland*, and combining it with an incisive and explicit historical commentary. No one is better qualified than Ruth Dudley Edwards to do it.